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Great World Religions: Islam

Course Guidebook

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PUBLISHED BY:

THE GREAT COURSES

Corporate Headquarters

4840 Westfields Boulevard, Suite 500

Chantilly, Virginia 20151-2299

Phone: 1-800-832-2412

Fax: 703-378-3819

www.thegreatcourses.com

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Great World Religions: Islam

Scope:

Islam today is the second largest and fastest-growing world religion, with majority populations in 56 countries spanning North Africa to Southeast Asia and significant minorities in Europe and the United States. Despite its more than 1.2 billion adherents, many in the West know little about the faith and are familiar only with the actions of a minority of radical extremists. Islam has had a significant impact on world affairs, both historically and in the contemporary era. Therefore, it is important to understand not only what it is that Muslims believe, but also how their beliefs are carried out both privately and publicly, both as individuals and as members of the Muslim community. We will see that Islam is not monolithic. Although Muslims share certain core beliefs, the practices, interpretations, images, and realities of Islam vary across time and space.

The focus of this course will be to better understand Islam's role as a religion and as a way of life. In 12 lectures, moving from Muhammad to the present, from the 7th to the 21st centuries, we will explore Muslim beliefs, practices, and history in the context of its significance and impact on Muslim life and society through the ages, as well as world events today. Thus, we will want to know the answers to many questions, including "What do Muslims believe?" "Who was Muhammad?" "How do Muslims view Judaism and Christianity and other faiths?" as well as "What is *jihad*?" "Does the Quran condone terrorism?" "Is Islam compatible with modernization, capitalism, and democracy?" and "Are women second-class citizens in Islam?"

As we see in Lectures 1 and 2, like Judaism and Christianity, Islam is one of the great monotheistic faiths that traces its ancestry to Abraham. We will discuss the similarities and differences in the three great Abrahamic faiths and explore more closely the core beliefs that serve as the common denominators that unite all Muslims throughout the world. We will also discuss the important and controversial concept of *jihad*, exploring the many roles *jihad* has played for Muslims historically and in contemporary

times. Lecture 3 focuses on the Prophet Muhammad, a messenger from God who called for major reforms in the polytheistic, tribal Arabian society and served as the living model for all Muslims as their religious, political, and military leader. Lecture 4 will focus on the Quran, the Muslim scripture revealed to Muhammad over a 22-year period, which Muslims believe is the literal, eternal, uncreated Word of God. The Quran is believed to reflect and correct earlier revelations in the Torah and New Testament and to be the final revelation of God to humankind. We will see what the Quran says about God, the relationship between men and women, and dealings with other religions and communities, as well as the conduct of war and maintenance of peace.

Lecture 5 traces the stunning growth of the Muslim community, which within 100 years of Muhammad's death, became a vast, dynamic, and creative Islamic empire that stretched from North Africa to India. Islamic civilization flourished under the Umayyad and Abbasid empires, and Muslims made original contributions to art, architecture, mathematics, science, philosophy, law, and mysticism. Examining the history of Islamic civilization helps us to appreciate the remarkable achievements of its "Golden Age" and to understand the sources of sectarianism, religious extremism, and the conflict between Islam and Christianity, epitomized by the Crusades.

Lecture 6 takes a closer look at the historical development of two great Islamic institutions, Islamic law, the Shariah, and Islamic mysticism, Sufism. Islamic law has been seen as the ideal blueprint guiding Muslims' correct action, that is, what to do in their public and private lives in order to realize God's will. Sufism resulted from efforts to experience a more direct and personal sense of God. Both law, the *exterior path* to God, and mysticism, known as the *interior path*, developed as responses to what was perceived as the abuse of the enormous wealth and power in the Islamic empires.

Lectures 7 and 8 focus on the historical tradition of Islamic renewal and reform that developed to fight internal disintegration and upheaval in the Muslim world caused by outside forces from the 17th to the 20th centuries. We will examine the variety of religious sociopolitical movements that struggled to address weakness and decline in diverse Muslim societies through the ages, and we will discuss how and why these efforts continue to inspire Islamic modernists and contemporary movements in our time.

Lecture 9 looks at the worldwide “struggle for the soul of Islam” occurring today between conservatives and reformers, mainstream Muslims and extremists, on such contentious issues as the role of religion in state and society, the treatment of minorities, the compatibility of Islam and democracy, and the complex relations between Islam and the West. Among these issues, none is more fraught with controversy than the debates about women and Islam. Lecture 10 examines women and their changing roles in the modern world, a hotly contested topic, not only in the Muslim world but also in the West. We will discuss the diversity of dress, social status, education, and roles for women in the family throughout the world and will look at how women are fighting patriarchy and empowering themselves to forge new paths in the 21st century. Lecture 11 expands this human dimension to spotlight the ever-increasing reality of Muslims as our neighbors and colleagues in Europe and America. We will look at how and why Muslims came to Europe and America and the issues of faith and identity, integration and assimilation that face them in their new homelands and the multitude of ways they are grappling with these challenges in society and the workplace.

Lecture 12 concludes our study of Islam by reviewing the key questions that are raised about Muslims and Islam today. We also look at prospects for Islam *and* the West and Islam *in* the West in the 21st century. ■

Islam Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Lecture 1

The diversity of cultural and religious practices of Islam is reflected by the geographic expanse of the Muslim world.

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam is one of the great monotheistic faiths that traces its ancestry to Abraham. Muslims share certain core beliefs, but the cultural practices, interpretations, and realities of Islam vary across time and space. Although Islam's more than 1 billion followers live in some 56 countries around the world, many in the West know little about the faith and are familiar only with the actions of a minority of radical extremists. Islam is the second largest and fastest growing of the world's religions, is part of the religious landscape of America and Europe, and has had a significant impact on world affairs.

The geographic, cultural, and religious diversity of Islam reflects its status as a world religion with a global presence and impact. Islam is the second largest and one of the fastest growing of the world's religions. Its followers can be found in some 56 countries and include many peoples, races, languages, ethnic groups, tribes, and cultures. Only 20 percent of the world's Muslims are Arab, the majority of Muslims live in Asian and African societies. Islam is a visible presence in the West as the second largest religion in Europe and soon to be the second largest in America. Despite the Islamic community's size, global presence, and significance, myths, stereotypes, and misinformation about Islam and Muslims abound.

The study of Islam today is often motivated by and cannot escape the threat that radical Islam—Muslim extremists and terrorists—have posed to their own societies and to the West. Significant interest in Islam in recent decades was not driven by Islam as the second largest and perhaps fastest growing world religion but by the challenge and threat of political Islam or Islamic fundamentalism. This is especially true after September 11, 2001, in the context of the war against global terrorism and, in particular, al-Qaeda.

Although all Muslims believe in God, the Quran, and the teachings of Muhammad, there is a rich diversity of interpretation and cultural practices. Understanding Islam requires a bridging of religion, history, politics, and culture. The word *islam* means “submission” or “surrender.” A Muslim seeks to follow and actualize God’s will in history, as an individual and a member of a worldwide faith community.

The Muslim community (*ummah*) is a transnational community of believers, God ordained and guided, to spread an Islamic order to create a socially just society.

**Like Judaism and Christianity,
Islam is one of the great
monotheistic faiths that traces
its ancestry to Abraham.**

Islam belongs to the family of great monotheistic faiths, the children of

Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jews and Christians trace their genealogy to Abraham through Sara and her son Isaac; Muslims represent the other branch of the family, which descends from Abraham’s son Ismail and Sarah’s handmaid, his mother, Hagar.

Although specific and significant differences exist among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all three faiths share a profound monotheism, belief in the one, transcendent God, who is creator, sustainer, and ruler of the universe. All believe in angels, Satan, prophets, revelation, moral accountability and responsibility, divine judgment, and eternal reward or punishment. Thus, for Muslims, Islam is the fulfillment and completion of earlier revelations.

Islam has a significant impact on world affairs. It is a dynamic religion that interfaces and, at times, competes with other faiths. In contrast to a separation of church and state, for many Muslims, religion and society, faith and power, are closely intertwined. From the creation of the first Muslim community in seventh-century Arabia to contemporary times, Muslims have debated and sought to implement God’s will in their personal, as well as public lives; in their families, as well as states and societies. Thus, to be a Muslim was to live in an Islamic community-state, governed by Islamic law.

From the time of Muhammad to the present, Muslims have engaged in a continuous process of applying Islam to the realities of life. Islamic law,

theology, and mysticism reflect this complex process. Religious doctrines, laws, and practices result not only from sacred texts but also from fallible interpreters, whose conclusions reflect their intelligence, political and social contexts, and customs, as well as power and privilege. The fact that interpreters of Islam were males living in patriarchal societies naturally affected the development of Islamic law and thought, especially its impact on women and the family.

Islamic doctrines and laws developed in response to political and social questions and issues. Thus, it is correct to say that there is one Islam, revealed in the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet, but Islamic tradition and heritage reveal many interpretations of Islam, some complementing each other, and others in conflict.

As Muslims today, like Jews and Christians, contend with the relationship of faith to the modern world, many questions arise. Should Islam be restricted to personal life or integral to the state, law, and society? Is Islam compatible with democracy, secularism, human rights, and the status of religious minorities, non-Muslims, and women? Muslims also face questions regarding the relationship of the Islamic world to the West. Christian-Muslim relations are often seen through the stereotype of *jihad* and extremism or a militant Judeo-Christian tradition of Crusades, Inquisition, European colonialism, and American neo-colonialism. Such perceptions lead both sides to foresee an impending clash of civilizations. In recent years, the questions of Islam and the West are joined to those of Islam in the West. Many issues are related to Muslim assimilation in non-Muslim countries. ■

Suggested Reading

Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Today*, chapter 1.

John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*.

———, “The Many Faces of the Muslim Experience,” *World Religions Today*, chapter 4.

Questions to Consider

1. What are some of the signs of the diversity of Islam today?
2. What are some of the questions that Muslims face in the modern world?

The Five Pillars of Islam

Lecture 2

All Muslims accept and follow the Five Pillars of Islam: These pillars are the core beliefs that unite all Muslims across time and space and are the hallmarks that distinguish Islam from all other faiths.

Despite enormous religious, cultural, and political differences and divisions, all practicing Muslims accept and follow these five simple required observances, prescribed in the Quran. These *Pillars of Islam* represent the core and common denominator that unite all Muslims and distinguish Islam from other religions. Following the Pillars of Islam involves a Muslim's mind, body, time, energy, and wealth. Meeting the obligations required by the pillars reinforces an ongoing sense of God's existence and presence and reminds Muslims of their membership in a worldwide community of believers.

The first pillar is the declaration of faith. A Muslim is one who bears witness, who testifies that "there is no god but God [Allah] and Muhammad is the messenger of God." *Allah* is the Arabic word for "God," just as *Yahweh* is the Hebrew for "God" used in the Old Testament. To become a Muslim, one need only make this simple proclamation or confession of faith. This proclamation affirms Islam's absolute monotheism, the uncompromising belief in the oneness or unity of God (*tawhid*). Association of anything else with God is idolatry and the one unforgivable sin.

The second part of the confession of faith asserts that Muhammad is not only a prophet but also a messenger of God, one to whom God has sent a book for a community. For Muslims, Muhammad is the vehicle for the final and complete revelation, the Quran. Like Jesus Christ, Muhammad serves as the preeminent role model through his life example. The believer's effort to follow Muhammad's example reflects the emphasis of Islam on practice and action. This practical orientation is reflected in the remaining four Pillars of Islam.

The second pillar of Islam is prayer (*salat*). Muslims pray (or, perhaps more correctly, worship) five times throughout the day: at daybreak, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening. In many Muslim countries, reminders to pray, or “calls to prayer,” echo out across the rooftops. The prayers consist of recitations from the Quran in Arabic and glorification of God, accompanied by standing, bowing, kneeling, touching the ground with one’s forehead, and sitting. Muslims can pray in any clean environment, alone or together, in a mosque or at home, at work or on the road, indoors or out. It is considered preferable and more meritorious to pray with others, demonstrating brotherhood, equality, and solidarity. When they pray, Muslims face Mecca, the holy city that houses the Kaaba (the house of God believed to have been built by Abraham and his son Ismail). Once a week on Friday, the Muslim equivalent of the Sabbath, the noon prayer is a congregational prayer at a mosque or Islamic center.

The third pillar of Islam is called the *zakat* or *tithe*, which means “purification.” *Zakat* is both an individual and communal responsibility, expressing



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The second pillar of Islam is prayer. Muslims worship five times throughout the day.

worship of and thanksgiving to God by supporting the poor. It requires an annual contribution of 2.5 percent of an individual's wealth and assets, not merely a percentage of annual income. *Zakat* is not viewed as "charity"; it is an obligation to respond to the needs of less fortunate members of the community. *Zakat* functions as a form of social security in a Muslim society.

Like Jesus Christ, Muhammad serves as the preeminent role model through his life and example.

The fourth pillar of Islam, the fast of Ramadan, occurs once each year during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar in which the first revelation of the Quran came to Muhammad. During this month-long fast, Muslims whose health permits them to do so must abstain from food, drink, and sexual activity during the period from dawn to sunset. Fasting is not simply an act of self-denial. It is a discipline intended to stimulate religious reflection on human frailty and dependence on God. Many go to the mosque for the evening prayer, followed by special prayers recited only during Ramadan. Near the end of Ramadan (the 27th day) Muslims commemorate the "Night of Power" when Muhammad first received God's revelation. The month of Ramadan ends with one of the two major Islamic celebrations, the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast, called *Eid al-Fitr*, which resembles Christmas in its religious joyfulness, special celebrations, and gift-giving.

The fifth pillar is the "pilgrimage," or *hajj*, to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. At least once in his or her lifetime, every adult Muslim who is physically and financially able is required to make this pilgrimage, becoming a pilgrim totally at God's service. Every year, more than 2 million believers, representing a tremendous diversity of cultures and languages, travel from all over the world to the holy city of Mecca to form one community living their faith. Those who participate in the pilgrimage wear simple garments that symbolize purity, as well as the unity and equality of all believers. The second major Muslim celebration, the *Eid al-Adha*, or the Feast of the Sacrifice, occurs toward the end of the pilgrimage.

Jihad, "to strive or struggle," is sometimes referred to as the sixth pillar of Islam, although it has no such official status. In its most general meaning,

jihad refers to the obligation incumbent on all Muslims, as individuals and as a community, to exert (*jihad*) themselves to realize God's will, to lead a virtuous life, to fulfill the universal mission of Islam, and to spread the Islamic community. More specifically, *jihad* also means the struggle for or defense of Islam, popularly referred to as "holy war." Despite the fact that *jihad* is not supposed to include aggressive, offensive warfare, as distinct from defensive warfare, this has occurred throughout history. As we shall see, the Five Pillars and the concept of *jihad* became integral parts of Islamic law and have remained central throughout Islamic history to what it means to be a Muslim. ■

Suggested Reading

Vincent J. Cornell, "The Fruit of the Tree," *The Oxford History of Islam*, chapter 2.

John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, chapter 3.

Michael Wolfe, *Hadj: An American's Pilgrimage to Mecca*.

Questions to Consider

1. How do the Five Pillars reflect Islam's emphasis on practice and action?
2. What are the multiple meanings of *jihad*?

Muhammad—Prophet and Statesman

Lecture 3

After 10 years of persecution and resistance in Mecca, Muhammad and the early Muslims moved to Medina, where Muhammad served as prophet, political ruler, military commander, chief judge, and lawgiver.

The birth of Muhammad (570–632 C.E.), prophet and statesman, and the rise of Islam has broad-based significance. The history of Muhammad and the emergence of the Muslim community have served as a paradigm to be remembered and emulated, as well as a sign that God's favor will be shown to those who carry out His will.

Muhammad is considered by Muslims to be both God's human instrument in receiving and reporting His revelation and the model or ideal for all believers, what some have called the "living Quran." Muhammad was a multifaceted personality who served as the religious, political, and military leader of a community-state. Muslims look to Muhammad's example for guidance in all aspects of life.

Information about Muhammad's life, deeds, and teachings is contained in the Quran, biographies, and the *hadith* ("tradition") literature. The religious message that Muhammad preached grew out of and responded to the realities of seventh-century Arabia. The success of Muhammad and the Muslim community was seen as a sign of God's favor to those who carry out His will. In contrast, such disasters as the fall of Baghdad in the 13th century or European colonial rule are seen by many as a sign of an errant Islamic community that had lost God's favor.

Religion in pre-Islamic Arabia was tribal in its religious, social, and political ideas and institutions and home to a variety of religious traditions and practices. Pre-Islamic Arabian religion was polytheistic, reflecting the tribal nature and social structure of society. Mecca, a rising commercial center, was the main site of a great annual pilgrimage to honor 360 different patron deities. The supreme god, Allah, was understood to be the creator and

sustainer of life and the universe but was remote from everyday concerns. Tribal and family honor were central virtues. Pre-Islamic Arabian religion had little sense of cosmic moral purpose or of individual or communal moral responsibility or afterlife.

The message of Islam was revealed during and responded to a time of great socioeconomic transition in Arabia. Mecca was emerging as a major mercantile center at the heart of a new political, social, and economic order. New wealth and the rise of a new commercial class led to the greater division between social classes and a growing disparity between rich and poor.

Amidst this environment, Muhammad was born a member of the most prominent and powerful tribe in Mecca, the Quraysh. He was orphaned at an early age and raised by his uncle, Abu Talib, a well-respected and powerful tribal member who provided Muhammad and, later, his community with protection in Medina. Before becoming a prophet, Muhammad earned his living as a business manager for the caravans of a wealthy widow named Khadija, whom he married. Khadija was also the first person to believe in the revelation Muhammad received, making her the first Muslim convert. During the 24 years of their marriage, Khadija was Muhammad's only wife.

Muhammad was a man known for his integrity, trustworthiness, and reflective nature, who would regularly retreat to a hilltop in the desert to reflect on the meaning of life. In 610, on a night remembered in Muslim tradition as the Night of Power and Excellence, Muhammad, a Meccan businessman, was called to be a prophet of God and, later, religio-political leader of the Muslim community-state. He heard a voice commanding him to "recite"; this revelation was the first of what would be many revelations from God (Allah), communicated by an intermediary, the Angel Gabriel. Muhammad continued to receive revelations over a period of 22 years, until his death in 632 C.E. These would later be collected and compiled into the Quran.

Muhammad's reformist message posed an unwelcome challenge to the religious and political establishment, the priests, tribal leaders, and businessmen of the community. The new religious message that Muhammad preached, like that of Amos and other biblical prophets before him, denounced the status quo and called for social justice for the poor and the

most vulnerable in society: women, children, and orphans. Muhammad's prophetic call summoned the people to strive and struggle (*jihad*) to reform their communities and to live a good life based on religious belief, not loyalty to their tribes. Muhammad's claim to be God's prophet and the divine revelation he proclaimed undermined traditional tribal political authority and sources of revenue (accrued during the annual pilgrimage and festival at the polytheistic shrine, Kaaba, in Mecca). The first 10 years of Muhammad's preaching in Mecca were marked by resistance and persecution and produced limited results.

Faced with ever-increasing threats and persecution, in 622 C.E., Muhammad and 200 of his followers emigrated to the town of Medina (approximately 250 miles away). This event, called the *hijra*, is centrally significant, as seen in the fact that the Muslim calendar begins with the year of the *hijra* and the creation of the Islamic community.

This year also marks the transformation of Islam from being purely a religion to being a political system. While in Medina, the first Islamic community-state was founded and the fortunes of the Muslim community improved.

The experience of Muhammad's nascent community would provide the model for later generations. The twin ideals of *hijra* (which means to emigrate from a hostile, un-Islamic, *jahiliyya*, environment) and *jihad* were established. These concepts became the guides for responding to persecution and rejection and to threats to the faith, the security, and the survival of the community. Both mainstream and extremist movements and "holy warriors," such as Osama bin Laden, have selectively used the pattern of *hijra* and *jihad* for their own purposes.

In Medina, Muhammad served as prophet, political ruler, military commander, chief judge, and lawgiver of the Muslim community, which was composed of Muslims and non-Muslims

In Medina, Muhammad served as prophet, political ruler, military commander, chief judge, and lawgiver of the Muslim community, which was composed of Muslims and non-Muslims—Arab polytheists, Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The Constitution or Charter of Medina established

by Muhammad, which sets out the rights and duties of all citizens and the relationship of the Muslim community to other communities, reflects the diversity of its society. It recognized the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) as an allied community, entitled to coexist with Muslims and retain and practice their religions in return for loyalty and payment of a poll tax (*jizya*).

Having established his community at Medina, Muhammad and his followers continued to experience bitter conflict with Mecca. Several key battles occurred, which are remembered as a source of inspiration and guidance. These battles culminated in the Battle of the Ditch (627 C.E.), which resulted in a shift of the balance of power in favor of Muhammad. It also marked the onset of a particular deterioration in Muslim-Jewish relations.

Muhammad had anticipated the acceptance and eventual conversion of the Jewish tribes to Islam. However, the Jews did not recognize Muhammad's prophethood, and in the Battle of the Ditch, some of the more powerful Jewish tribes fought against him. He ultimately crushed them, executing the men and capturing the women and children.

Muhammad's treatment of these Jewish tribes in Medina has been seen as anti-Semitic, but it is important to note that the tensions and ultimate violence between Muslims and Jews were more political than theological or racial. The Muslims of Medina continued to coexist with smaller Jewish tribes who honored the covenant and would go on doing so in later centuries in Islamic empires from Andalusia to the Ottoman Empire.

Finally, in 628 C.E., a truce was struck between the Meccans and the Muslims in Hudaibiyah, granting the Muslims the right to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. After establishing his leadership in Medina, Muhammad and his followers subdued Mecca and consolidated Muslim rule over the rest of Arabia through a combination of diplomatic and military means. ■

Suggested Reading

Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad*.

John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, chapter 1.

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways is Muhammad the model for Muslim life?
2. To what extent was Muhammad a religious reformer?

God's Word—the Quranic Worldview

Lecture 4

Muslims believe that the Quran is the literal, eternal, uncreated Word of God sent down from heaven to the Prophet Muhammad as a guide for humankind (Q 2:185).

The Quran confirms the Torah and the New Testament (Gospel) as revelation from God, but revelation that became corrupted over time. Thus, the Quran was sent as a correction, rather than a nullification or abrogation, of the Torah and the Gospel. Muslims believe, therefore, that Islam is the oldest of the monotheistic faiths, because it represents both the original and the final revelation of God.

The Quran was revealed in stages over a 22-year period, first to Muhammad in Mecca (610–622 C.E.) and, later, in Medina (622–632 C.E.). The Quran was preserved in both oral and written form during the lifetime of Muhammad but was not collected and compiled into its current format until the reign of the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (r. 644–656 C.E.).

The Quran's 114 chapters and 6,000 verses (shorter in length than the New Testament) were collected, rather than edited or organized thematically or chronologically. Longer chapters (Medinan) come first, with the shortest chapter (Meccan) at the end. Arabic, Muslims believe, as the sacred language of Islam, is the language of God. All Muslims, regardless of their mother tongue or country of origin, memorize and recite the Quran in Arabic. Quranic passages are central to Muslim prayer five times each day. The Quran was central to the development of Arabic linguistics, grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. One popular activity in the Muslim world is Quran recitation competitions. Quran reciters and chanters are held in great esteem in the Muslim world.

God (*Allah*, Arabic for “The God and Creator”) is central to the Quranic universe. The word *Allah* appears in the Quran more than 2,500 times. Allah is identified as the transcendent, all-powerful, and all-knowing creator, sustainer, ordainer, and judge of the universe. Although transcendent and,

thus, unknowable, God's nature is revealed in creation; His will, in revelation; and His actions, in history.

The Quran declares an absolute monotheism, that there is no god but The God (Allah). Thus, Muslims do not believe in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Muslims recognize Jesus as a prophet, not as God's son. Concerns about idolatry have led historically to a general ban on artistic representations of human beings; most Islamic art is based on the use of Arabic script in calligraphy or of arabesque (geometric and floral) designs. Although God is all-powerful and is the ultimate judge of humankind, at the same time, the Quran emphasizes that God is also merciful and compassionate.

The Quranic universe consists of three realms—heaven, earth, and hell—in which there are two types of beings—humans and spirits. All beings are called to obedience to God. Spirits include angels, *jinn*s, and devils. Human beings enjoy a special status because God breathed His spirit into the first human being, Adam. Humans were created by God to be His representatives on earth. The Quran teaches that God gave the earth to human beings as a trust so that they can implement His will. Although Muslims believe in the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, there is no doctrine of an inherited Original Sin in Islam. Consequently, in contrast to Christianity, there is no belief in a vicarious suffering or atonement for all of humankind. Islam emphasizes the need for sinners to repent by returning to the straight path of God. There is no emphasis on shame, disgrace, or guilt in Islam. There is an emphasis on the ongoing human struggle—*jihad*—to do what is right and just.

The obligation of Muslims to be God's servants and to spread God's message is both an individual and a community obligation. All believers are equal before God in Islam.

Poverty and social justice are prominent themes in the Quran, and Quranic reforms presented a significant threat to the tribal power structure in place. Throughout all its declarations, the Quran emphasizes the responsibility of the rich toward the poor and dispossessed. The new moral and social order called for by the Quran reflected the idea that the purpose of all actions is the fulfillment of God's will to create a socially just society, not following the

desires of tribes, nations, or the self. By asserting that all believers belong to a single universal community (*ummah*), the Quran sought to break the bonds of tribalism and create a sense of a broader Islamic identity.

Another major message in the Quran is that men and women are equal and complementary. Quranic revelations raised women's status in marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Men and women are equal in the eyes of God; man and woman were created to be equal parts of a pair (51:49). Men and women are equally responsible for promoting a moral order and adhering to the Five Pillars of Islam. (9:71–72).

The Quran frequently stresses pluralism and tolerance, that God has created not one but many nations and peoples. Many passages underscore the diversity of humankind. Despite the example of the Taliban in Afghanistan and sporadic conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Indonesia, theologically (and historically) Islam has a record of comparative tolerance. The Quran clearly and strongly states that “there is to be no compulsion in religion” (2:256). Jews and Christians are regarded as People of the Book, people who have also received a revelation and a scripture from God (the Torah for Jews and the Gospels for Christians). Historically, although the early expansion and conquests spread Muslim rule, in general, Muslims did not try to impose their religion on others or force them to convert.

The Quran frequently stresses pluralism and tolerance, that God has created not one but many nations and peoples.

From Egypt to Indonesia and Europe to America, Muslim reformers today work to reexamine their faith in light of the changing realities of their societies. Like Jews and Christians before them, they seek to reinterpret the sources of their faith to produce new religious understandings that speak to the realities of religious pluralism in the modern world. Many Muslims challenge the exclusivist religious claims and intolerance of Islamic groups who believe that they alone possess the “true” interpretation of Islam and attempt to impose it on other Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The use of *jihad* in the Quran helps us to explain the term's varied use throughout history. The two broad meanings of *jihad*, nonviolent and violent, are found in the Quran and expressly contrasted in a well-known prophetic tradition. This tradition reports that when Muhammad returned from battle, he told his followers, "We return from the lesser *jihad* ["warfare"] to the greater *jihad*." The greater *jihad* is the more difficult and more important struggle against one's ego, selfishness, greed, and evil.

In its most general meaning, *jihad* refers to the obligation to follow and realize God's will: to lead a virtuous life and to extend the Islamic community through preaching, education, example, writing, and so on. *Jihad* also includes the right, indeed the obligation, to defend Islam and the community from aggression. The earliest Quranic verses dealing with the right to engage in a "defensive" *jihad*, or "struggle," were revealed shortly after the *hijra* ("emigration") of Muhammad and his followers to Medina in flight from their persecution in Mecca.

As the Muslim community grew, questions quickly emerged as to what was proper behavior during times of war, providing detailed guidelines on who is to fight, when war should end, and how prisoners should be treated. However, Quranic verses also underscore that peace, not violence and warfare, is the norm. Permission and commands to fight the enemy are balanced by a strong mandate for making peace.

Today, we frequently hear the question "Does the Quran condone terrorism?" This is the kind of question no one asks of his or her own scripture and religion; we save it for others! Historically, some Muslims have engaged in terrorism and used the Quran and Islam to justify their actions. The Quran does not advocate or condone terrorism. Throughout the Quran, in many contexts, Muslims are reminded to be merciful and just. However, Islam does permit, indeed at times, requires, Muslims to defend themselves and their families, religion, and community from aggression.

Like all scriptures, Islamic sacred texts must be read within the social and political contexts in which they were revealed. It is not surprising that the Quran, like the Hebrew scriptures or Old Testament, has verses that address fighting and the conduct of war. The Quran emphasized that warfare and

the response to violence and aggression must be proportional: “Whoever transgresses against you, respond in kind.” The Quran also underscored that peace, not violence, is the norm. From the earliest times, it was forbidden in Islam to kill noncombatants, as well as women, children, monks, and rabbis, who were given the promise of immunity unless they took part in the fighting.

Throughout history, past and present, the Quran, like the scriptures of Judaism and Christianity, has been the sacred sourcebook to which believers in every age look for inspiration and guidance. As we shall see throughout this course, because it is interpreted by human beings in diverse historical and social contexts, the Word of God has yielded multiple and diverse meanings, doctrines, and practices. ■

Suggested Reading

Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Today*, chapter 2.

John Alden Williams, *The Word of Islam*, chapter 1.

Questions to Consider

1. What Quranic beliefs and values are similar to those found in other religions, notably Judaism and Christianity?
2. Why do Muslims believe that their faith requires action in the public sphere?

The Muslim Community—Faith and Politics

Lecture 5

For many who observed the development of Islam, particularly in early Islamic history, they are struck by the extent to which the Prophet Muhammad was both a prophet and a statesman.

The original community-state founded in Medina established the example of Islam as both a faith and a political order. Religion informed the institutions of the Islamic empire that spread to North Africa and Southeast Asia: the political system, the law, education, the military and social services. Islam split into two branches, a Sunni majority and Shii minority, over issues of leadership. These differing religious and political views led to different interpretations of history. The development of Islam and Muslim history from the period of Muhammad and the “Rightly-Guided Caliphs” to that of the Umayyad and Abbasid empires enables us to appreciate the remarkable political and cultural achievements of the “Golden Age” of Islamic civilization and to understand the sources of sectarianism, religious extremism, and conflict between Islam and Christianity, epitomized by the Crusades.

The history of Islam demonstrates the extent to which religion is integrally related to politics and society. Faith, power, civilization, and culture are intertwined. The relationship of faith and a political order were embodied in the existence and spread of the original community-state at Medina. Within a century after Muhammad’s death, Islam as a faith and as an Islamic empire stretched from North Africa to South Asia. Islam informed state institutions, including the caliphate, law, education, the military, and social services.

The development of the Caliphate began with the traumatic event of Muhammad’s death in 632 C.E., marking the end of direct guidance from the Prophet. The majority of Muslims, who came to be called Sunnis, or followers of the Sunnah (“example”) of the Prophet (Sunni Muslims today make up 85 percent of the world’s Muslims), selected Abu Bakr, Muhammad’s close companion and trusted advisor, as well as his father-in-law, to be the *caliph* (“successor, deputy”). Sunni Muslims adopted the

belief that leadership should pass to the most qualified person, not through hereditary succession. As caliph, Abu Bakr became the political and military leader of the community.

A minority of the Muslim community, the Shiis, or “Party of Ali,” opposed the selection of Abu Bakr as caliph, believing that succession should be hereditary within the Prophet’s family and that Ali, Muhammad’s first cousin and closest living male relative, should be the leader (called *imam*) of the Islamic community. Ali was passed over for the position of caliph three times, finally gaining his place after 35 years, only to be assassinated a few years later. Ali’s charismatic son Hussein, along with his small band of followers, was overwhelmed and massacred by the army of the Sunni Caliph Yazid. This tragedy of Karbala and “martyrdom of Hussein” became a paradigmatic event, remembered and reenacted ritually in a passion play every year.

Muslims point out that the differences between Sunnis and Shiis do not have to do with dogma but, rather, are political, concerning the qualifications for the head of the Muslim community. Their shared belief and practice notwithstanding, however, they also developed different views about the meaning of history. Sunnis claim a “Golden Age,” when they were a great world power and civilization, which they believe is evidence of God’s favor upon them and a historic validation of Muslim beliefs. Shiis, as an oppressed and disinherited minority, see in these same developments the illegitimate usurpation of power by Sunni rulers at the expense of a just society.

The original Muslim state was expanded by Muhammad to extend and consolidate Muslim authority over Arabia through a combination of force and diplomacy. The most striking aspect of the early expansion of Islam was its rapidity and success. Within 100 years after the death of the Prophet, the Muslim empire and rule extended from North Africa to South Asia, an empire greater than Rome at its zenith. The new order of Islam was to be a community of believers who acknowledged the sovereignty of God, lived according to Islamic law, and dedicated their lives to spreading God’s law and rule.

The Muslim expansion was marked by building (adoption and adaptation of existing political institutions and sciences), rather than destruction, and

motivated by religious fervor, as well as the desire for economic rewards. Although the indigenous rulers and armies of the conquered countries were replaced, much of their government, bureaucracy, and culture was preserved. Muslim rule was often more flexible and tolerant than that of the Byzantine or Persian empires. These early conquests sought to spread Muslim rule, rather than to gain converts to Islam. The inhabitants of newly conquered areas were given three options: (1) convert to Islam, (2) accept *dhimmi* (“protected”) status and pay a poll tax, or (3) face battle or the sword, if they rejected the first two options.

The period of Muhammad and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (632–661 C.E.) is regarded as the normative period of Sunni Islam and serves as the idealized past to which Muslims look for inspiration and guidance. The Rightly-Guided Caliphs were the first four successors to Muhammad. All of them were Muhammad’s companions and were chosen by a process of consultation, followed by an oath of allegiance.

Sectarianism and extremism in the Muslim empire were born with two civil wars following the succession of the fourth caliph, Ali; both were sparked by Ali’s failure to find and punish the murderers of the third caliph, Uthman. Following Ali’s assassination in 661 C.E. by a splinter group, the Kharijites (“those who leave or secede”), the caliphate was seized by Muawiyah, who moved the capital to Damascus. Muawiyah founded the Umayyad Dynasty, ending what later generations would call the “Golden Age” of Muhammad and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and turning the caliphate into an absolute, hereditary monarchy dominated by an Arab military aristocracy.

From the eighth to the 12th centuries, Islam and Muslim political power expanded exponentially under the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. The Umayyad Dynasty (661–750 C.E.), centered in Damascus, completed the conquest of the entire Persian and half of the Roman (Byzantine) empires. The Umayyads were successful in acquiring power and wealth, symbolized by the lifestyle of the flourishing, cosmopolitan capital in Damascus and the growth of new cities. But these strengths were considered by some to be innovations that undermined the older Arab way of life and sowed the seeds of destruction.

The Umayyads met with considerable opposition. One opposing group was a splinter group, the Kharijites, the earliest example of radical dissent in Islam, who combined rigorous puritanism with religious fundamentalism and exclusivist egalitarianism. The Kharijites continue to inspire religious extremist groups today. The Shii (shiat al-Ali, or “Party of Ali”) opposed the Umayyads because of their refusal to submit to Ali’s authority and their illegitimate usurpation of the caliphate. The Umayyad caliphate came to an end in 750 C.E., after a revolt led by an Abbasid slave that led to the foundation of the Abbasid caliphate.

Under Abbasid rule (750–1258 C.E.), the Islamic community became an empire of wealth, political power, and cultural accomplishments. The Abbasid caliphate ushered in an era of strong centralized government, great economic prosperity, and a remarkable civilization. They aligned their government with Islam and became patrons of the emerging class of *ulama* (“religious scholars”). They also supported the development of Islamic scholarship and disciplines, built mosques, and established schools. Abbasid success was based on trade, commerce, industry, and agriculture, rather than conquest.

Enormous wealth enabled the Abbasid caliphs to become great patrons of art and culture, resulting in the florescence of Islamic civilization. Muslims made original creative contributions in law, theology, philosophy, literature, medicine, algebra, geometry, science, art, and architecture. Islamic philosophy grew out of and extended the teachings and insights of Greek philosophy but in an Islamic context and worldview. The cultural traffic pattern was again reversed when Europeans, emerging from the Dark Ages, turned to Muslim centers of learning to regain their lost heritage and to learn from Muslim advances. Through Islamic philosophy, Greek philosophy was re-transmitted to Europe. Many of the great medieval Christian philosophers and theologians acknowledged their intellectual debt to their Muslim predecessors.

Muslims regard the time of the Abbasid caliphate as the sign of God’s favor upon Muslims and the validation of both Islam’s message and the Muslim community’s universal mission. Abbasid patronage included the Arabization of the empire, so that Arabic became the language of literature and public discourse. Centers were created for the translation of

manuscripts from Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Persian into Arabic. The Arabization and Islamization of new ideas was a process of change, assimilation, and acculturation characterized by continuity with the faith and practice of Muhammad and controlled by Muslims. The Golden Age of Islamic civilization ironically paralleled the progressive political fragmentation of the universal caliphate, as internal and external opposition arose, particularly from the Fatimid Dynasty and the Crusades.

The Crusades established a paradigm of confrontation between Islam and Christianity and Islam and the West.

The Crusades (1095–1453) established a paradigm of confrontation between Islam and Christianity and Islam and the West, the legacy of which continues to affect Muslim-Christian relations and relations between the Muslim world and the West. The Christian West experienced the spread of Islam as both a religious and a political threat. Challenged both theologically and politically, Christian Europeans responded. Muhammad was vilified as the anti-Christ and Islam, as a religion of the sword. Europe engaged in the *Reconquista*, a struggle to reconquer territories in Spain, Italy, and Sicily, and a holy war, the Crusades. The Crusades ended in 1453 when Constantinople, the Byzantine capital, fell to the Turks and was renamed Istanbul. Istanbul became the seat of the Ottoman Empire.

The Abbasid caliphate was replaced by a variety and series of sultanates. They extended from Africa to Southeast Asia as Islam penetrated Africa, Central and Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe, largely through the missionary work of traders and Sufi brotherhoods. Three imperial sultanates emerged: the Turkish Ottoman Empire (1281–1924), the Persian Safavid Empire (1501–1722), and the Indian Mughal Empire (1520–1857), all of which experienced political power and cultural florescence. By the turn of the 18th century, the power and prosperity of the sultanates were in serious decline. This decline coincided with the Industrial Revolution and modernization in the West, leading to clashes in the era of European colonialism. ■

Suggested Reading

Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Today*, chapter 5.

Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair, *Islam: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power*, chapters 5 and 8.

Fred M. Donner, “Muhammad and the Caliphate” and “Science, Medicine, and Technology,” *The Oxford History of Islam*, chapters 1 and 4.

John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, chapter 2.

Questions to Consider

1. How did Islam influence the development of Muslim empires, from political institutions to social structures?
2. What were some of the major achievements of Islamic civilization?

Paths to God—Islamic Law and Mysticism

Lecture 6

Piety, as well as the desire for reform, resulted in the development of Islamic law and Islamic mysticism.

Islamic law reflects Islam's emphasis on *orthopraxy* ("correct practice"), rather than *orthodoxy* ("correct belief"). Islamic law applies to both the private and public realms and is concerned with human interactions with God (worship) and with each other (social relations). Sufism, as the "interior path," has emphasized personal spirituality and devotion and has played an important role in the spread of Islam through missionary activities.

Dissatisfaction with abuses of power and corruption in Umayyad rule gave rise to the development of two Islamic movements or institutions: Islamic law, the Shariah, and Sufism, or Islamic mysticism. Islamic law was a response to real religious, political, and social concerns and issues. Piety and politics were intertwined. Those who turned to law during the Umayyad Dynasty in the eighth and ninth centuries did so to limit the autonomy and power of rulers, by standardizing the law and taking its control out of the hands of the caliph or his appointed judges. Many centers or schools of thought were established, but four major Sunni law schools have endured: the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali. The development of law flourished during the 10th century under the Abbasid Dynasty in the hands of a new class of scholars—the *ulama* ("learned ones").

Islamic law springs from the basic meaning and requirement of Islam, submission to and realization of God's will. The Quran teaches that Muslims must strive or struggle (*jihad*) in the path (Shariah) of God to implement God's will on earth, expand and defend their community, and establish a just society. Like Judaism, and in contrast to Christianity, which emphasizes *orthodoxy* ("correct belief"), Islam emphasizes *orthopraxy* ("correct action").

Though they overlap, the distinction between Shariah and *fiqh* is critical to understanding the meaning and dynamic nature of Islamic law and its

possibilities for reinterpretation and reform today. Shariah in the Quran and in Islam refers specifically to divine law, for God is the only lawgiver. Islamic law is a broader category that encompasses the divine law and human understanding (*fiqh*) and interpretation of God's law. The development of Islamic law was the work of religious scholars (*ulama*), rather than judges, courts, or governments.

The two main divisions of law concern: A Muslim's duties to God, obligatory practices or essential observances, such as the Five Pillars. A Muslim's duties

The two main divisions of law concern a Muslim's duties to God, obligatory practices or essential observances, such as the Five Pillars, [and] a Muslim's duties to others.

to others, social transactions or relations, which include regulations governing public life, from contract and international law to family laws governing marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

Sunni Muslims recognize four official sources of Islamic law: The bulk of the Quran consists of broad, general moral directives

or principles. Approximately 80 prescriptions in the Quran rank as legal prescriptions; most come from the Medinan period when Muhammad was establishing the first Islamic community state. The second source is the Sunnah ("example") of the Prophet, what he said and did, which was believed to be preserved in narrative stories or reports known as "traditions of the Prophet" (*hadith*). The third source is analogical reasoning (or *qiyas*), a technique used when no clear text of the Quran or Sunnah directly relevant to a legal question exists. Jurists then use their independent judgment or reasoning (called *ijtihad*) to examine similar situations with principles that could be applied to the new situation. This led to a great deal of diversity of opinion. The fourth source is the consensus (*ijma*) of the community, which in practice meant the consensus of the majority of scholars (*ulama*) who were the guardians and interpreters of the law. This source originated from a tradition of the Prophet that said, "My community will never agree on an error."

Shii Muslims have a somewhat different set of legal sources. They accept the Quran and Sunnah, as well as their own collections of the traditions of Ali and other *imams* or preeminent leaders, whom they regard as supreme authorities and legal interpreters.

Islamic law is a source of both unity and of difference and diversity. Different law schools reflect individual reasoning and social customs of diverse geographic, social, historical, and cultural contexts. Reformers reclaim the right to *ijtihad* (“independent reasoning”) to reinterpret Islam to address the new contingencies and needs of modern society. A considerable variance is found in the diversity of legal opinions or interpretations (*fatwas*) rendered by legal experts (*muftis*) who advise judges and litigants. Because of the centrality of the community in Islam, the Muslim family as the basic unit of society enjoyed pride of place in the development and implementation of Islamic law. The formulation of Muslim family law (marriage, divorce, and inheritance) has been subject to reform and widespread debate and revision since the 20th century. Although the Quran introduced a number of reforms that enhanced the status of women, these reforms were often compromised by social realities and circumvented. Much of the traditional pre-Islamic patriarchal social structure is incorporated into Islamic law. Legal reform remains a contested issue in many Muslim countries today. Fundamentalist voices reject reforms as un-Islamic. Few governments have been willing to replace Islamic law and be accused of abrogating “God’s law.”

Like Islamic law, Sufism—or Islamic mysticism—began as a reform movement in response to the growing materialism and wealth of Muslim society that accompanied the expansion and growing power of the Islamic Empire. Early Sufis found the emphasis on laws, rules, duties, and rights to be spiritually lacking. Instead, they emphasized the “interior path,” seeking the purity and simplicity of the time of Muhammad as the route to direct and personal experience of God. They pursued an ascetic lifestyle that emphasized detachment from the material world, repentance for sins, and the Last Judgment.

Sufis have often played an important role in the political life of Muslims, spearheading Islamic revivalist waves that regenerated societies, creating Islamic states, and fighting off colonial powers.

The Sufi orders also played an important role in the spread of Islam through missionary work because of their tendency to adopt and adapt to local non-Islamic customs and practices in new places, along with their strong devotional and emotional practices. Because of Sufism's adoption of external, "un-Islamic" influences, Sufis conflicted with the more legal-oriented *ulama* over authority and power. These religious divergences were synthesized and reconciled and Islam was revived through the teachings of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111), called the Renewer of Islam.

By the 13th century, Sufi brotherhoods had created international networks of lodges or monasteries that transformed Sufism into a mass movement. Sufi leaders enjoyed great influence, both spiritual and material. Many of Sufism's characteristics find similar experiences in Christianity and other faiths, such as monasteries, distinctive garb, ascetic practices, litanies, and saints. The Whirling Dervishes represent Sufism's most famous use of music and dance to induce states of mystic communication.

Today, Sufism remains a strong spiritual presence and force in Muslim societies, in both private and public life, and enjoys a wide following in Europe and America, attracting many converts to Islam. ■

Suggested Reading

John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, chapters 2–3.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Law and Society," *The Oxford History of Islam*, chapter 3.

Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?*

Questions to Consider

1. What are the sources of Islamic law?
2. What is Sufism and what role did it play in the spread of Islam?

Islamic Revivalism—Renewal and Reform

Lecture 7

From the 17th to the 20th centuries, the Muslim world experienced both internal disintegration and upheaval and the external aggression of the European colonial era. A variety of religious sociopolitical movements arose throughout the Muslim world in response.

The Islamic world experienced a major transition as the power, prosperity, and dynamic expansionism of imperial Islam gave way to political disintegration and social and moral decline, followed by the advent of European colonialism throughout much of the Muslim world. Pre-modern revivalist movements of the 17th and 18th centuries addressed social and moral problems and provided inspiration to late 19th- and 20th-century Islamic modernist movements that offered Islamic responses to the challenges of European colonialism and modernization. Islam possesses a long history and tradition of religious revival and reform in response to perceived compromises in faith and practice. Islamic concepts of renewal (*tajdid*) and reform (*islah*) are based in the Quran and Sunnah, and both call for a return to these sources. Renewal and reform are carried out by practicing *ijtihad*, or “personal interpretation” of the Quran and Sunnah. Great revivalists throughout Islamic history have claimed the right to function as *mujtahids* in order to purify and revitalize their societies.

A wave of religio-political revivalism in the 17th and 18th centuries spread across the Islamic world from the Sudan to Sumatra, with some of the most important events occurring in Arabia, Africa, and India. The ideological worldviews of revivalists shared several points in common: The purpose of pre-modernist revivalists was not to reinterpret Islam to yield new solutions but to return to the pure and pristine vision of Islam, preserved in the Quran and Sunnah, and to reestablish an authentic Islamic community modeled on the Prophet and his early companions. For this reason, these types of revivals have been referred to as fundamentalist movements. The process involved the creation of a socio-moral reform movement governed by Islamic law, a religious community-state of “true believers,” in contrast to existing societies that were no longer truly Islamic. Removal of foreign un-Islamic

practices that had infiltrated and corrupted the community was necessary. Struggle (*jihad*), whether through moral self-discipline or armed conflict, was required to reassert the rightful place of Islam in society. Muslims who resisted these measures were no longer regarded as Muslims, but were to be numbered among the enemies of God.

A series of revivalist movements led to the establishment of several Islamic states: the Wahhabi in Arabia and Africa, the Fulani in Nigeria, the Sanusi in Libya, and the Mahdi in the Sudan. In contrast to the Wahhabi, who were anti-Sufi, African movements were distinguished by their Sufi leadership—reformist, militant, and politically oriented charismatic heads of Sufi orders. The Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia and the Mahdi in the Sudan are perhaps the most well known of pre-modern Islamic movements. Each has had a formative influence on modern Muslim states and, although similar in some respects, each represents contrasting styles of leadership and reform. The Wahhabi movement (founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, 1703–1792) chose to completely suppress rather than merely reform Sufism, including destroying the tombs of the Prophet and Husayn. This act influenced Ayatollah Khomeini's call for the overthrow of the House of Saud and had an impact on the conflict between the Sunni majority and Shii minority in Saudi Arabia. Some have claimed Wahhabi influence in the Taliban's destruction of Buddhist monuments in Afghanistan.

In contrast to the Wahhabi movement, the Mahdi of the Sudan (Muhammad Ahmad, 1848–1885, founder of the Mahdiyya Order) claimed to be a divinely appointed representative of God. He justified holy war against other Muslims by pronouncing them blasphemers. His movement reformed Sufism; alcohol, prostitution, gambling, and music were outlawed as foreign (Ottoman Egyptian), un-Islamic practices that had corrupted society.

Islamic modernism of the 19th and 20th centuries was a response both to continued internal weaknesses and to the external political and religious-cultural threat of European colonialism. The result of Western imperialism for Muslims was a period of self-criticism and reflection on the causes of decline. Secularists blamed an outmoded tradition in Islam and advocated the separation of religion and politics and the establishment of the Western model of modern nation-state building. Conservative religious leaders advocated

non-cooperation or rejection of the West, believing that accommodation of Western culture was tantamount to betrayal and surrender. Some even advocated armed struggle (*jihad*) or emigration to Islamic territory.

Islamic modernists sought to reinterpret Islam to demonstrate its compatibility with modern Western science and thought and to meet the changing circumstances of Muslim life through legal, educational, political, and social reforms. In the Middle East, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) called for religious, scientific, and political reforms in order to defend Islam, strengthen the Muslim community, and ultimately, regain independence from the West. His disciples or protégés, Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935), were the great religious reformers of modern Islam. They founded the Salafiyyah movement, whose influence extended from North Africa to Southeast Asia.

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In the Indian subcontinent, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) called for a modern, rational reinterpretation of Islam based on the acceptance of the best that Western thought had to offer. He was especially supportive of educational reforms that would allow for the development of a new generation of Muslim leaders equipped to face the challenges and demands of modernity and the West.

Muhammad Iqbal (1875–1938), the most important Indian reformer and poet of the 20th century, educated in Britain and Germany, emphasized the dynamism and creativity of Islam, arguing for a reconstruction of religious thought in Islam. He was especially important for his Islamization of Western concepts, such as democracy and parliamentary government. He emphasized the ideal of an Islamic community that transcended ethnic, racial, and national ties.

Although Islamic modernism existed in different places and contexts, Islamic modernists shared some common teachings and understandings. Modernists rejected an unquestioned return to past solutions in favor of accepting and incorporating change and proclaimed Islam the religion of reason, science, and nature. They reclaimed the progressive, creative past of Islam, whose political and cultural florescence demonstrated Islam's ability to produce great empires and civilizations. They stressed that stagnation and decline were caused by blind imitation of the past (*taqlid*); the continued survival and revitalization of the Muslim community required a bold reinterpretation (*ijtihad*) of Islam's religious tradition. They criticized the popular religious practices of Sufism as responsible for un-Islamic and even superstitious practices that were a major source of decline.

Islamic modernism had both positive and negative results. It appealed to only an elite group of intellectuals and never developed into a popular mass movement that could implement change at a national or regional level. Modernists did not provide a systematic, comprehensive theology or program for legal reform or establish effective organizations to continue and implement ideas once the original charismatic leaders were gone. Modernists, however, emphasized pride in an Islamic heritage and the dynamic, progressive, rational character of Islam, helping new Muslim generations to see change as an opportunity, rather than a threat, and providing the vocabulary for a new Islamic discourse for change. Modernists inspired educational reforms and nationalist independence movements rooted in religion that harnessed Islam for mass mobilization. Islamic modernism produced a legacy of reinterpretation that often resulted in a synthesis of traditional concepts and modern thought to relate Muslim faith and religious tradition to modern realities. The holistic approach of modernists viewed Islam as a comprehensive guide for both public and private life, making Islam an alternative ideology for both modern state and society.

Some Muslims rejected conservative and modernist positions in favor of Islamic organizations that combined religious activism and ideology. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Jamaat-i Islami (Islamic Society) of the Indian subcontinent are prominent examples of modern neo-revivalist Islamic organizations that linked religion to activism. Both movements

emerged in the shadow of British colonialism in societies where anticolonial national independence movements were active. The leaders, Hasan al-Banna and Mawlana Abu al-Ala Mawdudi, respectively, were pious, committed Muslims whose upbringing exposed them to Islamic education, Islamic modernist thought, and Western learning. Both leaders combined religious reform with social activism. Both leaders formed ideological fraternities in which members were trained and reinforced in their faith and commitment to create a more Islamically oriented state and society. They supported religious instruction, youth work, schools, hospitals, religious publications, and social welfare projects.

The actual means of carrying out their visions differed. The Muslim Brotherhood grew rapidly as a mass movement, expanding to include members of the lower and middle classes in both rural and urban areas. The Jamaat remained a more elitist group, particularly focused on developing a new core of well-educated and Islamically committed leaders. The Muslim Brotherhood's dissatisfaction with the Egyptian government's failure to establish an Islamic state escalated into violence and the assassination of al-Banna, culminating in the repression of the Brotherhood and a long series of confrontations, imprisonments, proscriptions, and executions. The Jamaat served as an opposition party within the system, working through elections and political action, although some of its leaders, including Mawdudi, were imprisoned.

Both the Brotherhood and the Jamaat became models that sparked similar movements across the Muslim world. Both gained popular support when they addressed issues that directly concerned a cross-section of society: colonialism, dependence on the West, religious identity, poverty, illiteracy, economic exploitation, education, and health care. Involvement with the material world and the pursuit of social justice, political and social activism, were critical components of the neo-revivalist message. They did not simply propagate religion but called on Muslims to become better and more involved in society. ■

Suggested Reading

John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, chapter 4.

———, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, chapter 3.

John O. Voll, “Foundations for Renewal and Reform,” *The Oxford History of Islam*, chapter 12.

Questions to Consider

1. What were the causes for and responses of revival/reform movements?
2. What were the major achievements and failures of Islamic modernists?
3. How have 20th-century Islamic movements built on past movements and what new ideas and methods have they implemented?

The Contemporary Resurgence of Islam

Lecture 8

In the last decades of the 20th century, the Muslim world experienced the impact of another revival or resurgence of Islam in personal and in public life.

In the last decades of the 20th century, a series of political events and economic realities led to the desire of many Muslims to achieve greater authenticity and self-definition through a revival of Islam. This revival was reflected both in private life (greater mosque attendance and concern with Islamic dress and values) and in public life through political and social activism. While reformist movements have worked within mainstream society for change, extremists have resorted to violence and terrorism to achieve their goals. On the personal level, many Muslims have become more religiously observant, finding in Islam a sense of identity, meaning, and guidance.

In the public sphere, new Islamic governments or republics have been established in Iran, Sudan, and Afghanistan. Rulers, political parties, and opposition movements have appealed to Islam. Mainstream Islamic activists head governments and serve in cabinets, in elected parliaments, and as senior officials of professional associations of doctors, lawyers, engineers, and professors. At the same time, radical Islamic organizations have engaged in violence and terrorism to topple governments or to achieve related goals.

The causes and conditions that led to the contemporary resurgence of Islam are many. During the 20th century, Islamic empires and sultanates were obliterated and replaced by modern nation-states. Many countries in the Middle East were quite literally newly created, “mapped out” by European colonial powers (Britain and France) after World War I. Between World War I and World War II, most of newly created states won their independence from European colonial rulers. However, both the national boundaries of many modern states and their rulers, many of whom were placed on their thrones by Britain or France, such as in Jordan, Syria, and Iraq, were artificial creations. Moreover, European education, culture, and values permeated the

urban areas and strongly influenced the elites in most states and societies. As a result, issues of government legitimacy, as well as national and religious-cultural identity, remained unresolved. Rulers rooted their legitimacy in an authoritarian state whose stability was due more to foreign (Western or Soviet) support, coupled with strong military-security apparatus, rather than an indigenous culture, political participation, and electoral politics.

Once these modern nation-states were created in the Muslim world, it was expected that they would generally follow a “modern,” that is, Western, secular path of development. Although the majority populations in these countries were Muslim, they adopted Western-inspired institutions: parliaments, political party systems, legal codes, educational systems and curricula, banks, and insurance companies. However, the majority of countries, such as Egypt, Syria, Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia, created what may be called Muslim states, in which the majority populations were Muslim, but despite some religious prescriptions, adopted Western-inspired institutions. Throughout much of the 20th century, progress and prosperity



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When Muslim armies took Jerusalem without resistance in 635, they restored and rebuilt the temple. First they built a large mosque, the al-Aqsa, and then a shrine, the Dome of the Rock.

in Muslim societies depended on the degree to which Muslims and their societies were “modern”; this also meant conforming to “Western” and “secular” values.

Based on these criteria, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, and Iran were often seen as among the more modern, advanced, and “enlightened,” that is, Westernized and secular, countries. Saudi Arabia, the states of the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan were generally regarded as more traditional, religious, and thus, “backward.”

The failure of “modernity” in the 1960s and 1970s shattered the hopes and dreams of many who believed that national independence and Western-oriented development would usher in strong states and prosperous societies. A series of wars and riots during the 1960s and 1970s revealed the pitfalls and failures of many states and societies. Such catalytic events triggered a soul-searching reassessment among many Muslims focused on the reliance on Western models. Perhaps the most significant symbolic event, which sparked Muslim disillusionment and dissatisfaction, was the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which came to be called the Six Day War. Because of its role in Islamic tradition, the loss of Jerusalem in the 1967 war was a traumatic experience, not only for Arab Muslims and Arab Christians alike, but also for Muslims worldwide, who all revere Jerusalem as a site of central religious significance.

The realities of Muslim societies (poverty, illiteracy, failed economies, high unemployment, and malapportionment of wealth) raised profound questions of national identity and political legitimacy and of religious faith and meaning. The signs of profound change would not become fully evident and appreciated in the West until a decade later, with the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979.

Disillusionment and dissatisfaction with modernity were accompanied by an Islamic revival, marked by a quest for self-identity and greater authenticity, as many reaffirmed the importance of Islam and Islamic values in their personal and social lives. Islamic ideology, discourse, and politics reemerged as a major force in the development of the Muslim world, a force that both Muslim and Western governments have had to accommodate or contend

with for several decades. Several phenomena may be identified as common to the contemporary Muslim experience: An identity crisis precipitated by a sense of utter impotence and loss of self-esteem. Disillusionment with the West (with its models of development and with the West as an ally) and with the failure of many

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was clear that Islamists had moved from the periphery to mainstream politics and society.

governments to respond adequately to the political and socio-economic needs of their societies. A quest for greater authenticity, that is, to reappropriate a greater sense of indigenous identity, history, and values. Newfound sense of pride and power, which resulted from the Arab-Israeli war and oil embargo of 1973, the success of the Afghan

mujahideen in their war against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and the global impact of Iran's Islamic revolution of 1978–1979. For many, these were signs of a resurgence of Islam and God's help to those who fought against overwhelming odds in the name of Islam.

Although a tremendous diversity existed in the religious worldview and politics of Islamic activism from country to country, nevertheless, Islamic activists did share the following beliefs: Islam, a comprehensive way of life, is and must be integral to politics and society. The failures of Muslim societies were caused by departing from the path of Islam and depending on Western secularism, which separated religion and politics. Muslims must return to the Quran and the example of the Prophet Muhammad, specifically by reintroducing Islamic rather than Western laws. Modern development must be guided by Islamic values rather than the Westernization and secularization of society.

Islamic symbols, slogans, ideology, leaders, and organizations became prominent fixtures in Muslim politics. Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, Pakistan's General Zia ul-Haq, Egypt's Anwar Sadat, and Sudan's Jafar Numayri appealed to Islam to enhance their legitimacy and authority and to mobilize popular support.

At the same time, Islamic movements and organizations sprang up across the Muslim world. Opposition movements appealed to Islam: the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, militants who seized the Grand Mosque in 1979, religious extremists who assassinated Anwar Sadat in 1981, Afghan freedom fighters in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Other Islamic movements and organizations throughout the 1980s created or extended their influence over religious, educational, social, cultural, professional, and financial institutions. The leadership of most Islamic organizations (particularly Sunni groups) was and remains lay rather than clerical. Islamists have earned degrees in modern science, medicine, law, engineering, computer science, and education. Although the majority of Islamic organizations worked within the system, a minority of radical extremists insisted that violence and revolution were the only way to liberate society.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was clear that Islamists had moved from the periphery to mainstream politics and society; a “quiet [nonviolent] revolution” had institutionalized Islamic revivalism and activism in mainstream society. Islamically inspired social and political activism produced schools, clinics, hospitals, day care, legal aid, youth centers, private (as opposed to government-controlled) mosques, and financial institutions, such as Islamic banks and insurance companies. Islamic candidates participated in local and national electoral politics and assumed positions of leadership in professional associations and trade unions. An alternative elite emerged in every sector of society, with a modern education but Islamically (rather than secularly) oriented.

Perhaps nowhere was the impact of the Islamic revival experienced more visibly than in political elections. As a legacy of pre-modern Muslim history and colonialism, the majority of governments in the Muslim world are authoritarian, but during the late 1980s, in response to mass demonstrations, elections were held in a number of countries and Islamic organizations emerged as the major political opposition. By the mid-1990s, Islamic activists could be found in the cabinets and parliaments of many countries and the leadership of professional organizations (doctors, lawyers, engineers). At the same time, radical extremist groups, such as like Egypt’s Gamaa Islamiyya (Islamic Group), attacked Christian churches, businesses, tourists, and security forces.

Other extremists were convicted in America and Europe for terrorist acts, such as the bombing of New York's World Trade Center in 1993, of the American barracks in Saudi Arabia in 1995, and of American embassies in Africa in 1998, leading some governments and analysts to identify "Islamic fundamentalism" as a major threat to global stability. ■

Suggested Reading

John L. Esposito, "Contemporary Islam: Reformation or Revolution?," *The Oxford History of Islam*.

———, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, chapter 4.

John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Muslim World*, chapters 6–7.

Questions to Consider

1. What were the major catalysts for contemporary Islamic revivalism?
2. Compare and contrast the worldviews and strategies of mainstream and extremists movements.

Islam at the Crossroads

Lecture 9

What are the relevant and acceptable interpretations of Islam for today's world?

Like members of other faith communities, contemporary Muslims face the challenge of defining the role, meaning, and relevance of Islam in both private and public life. Often we focus on radicalism and extremism, but a deeper and more pervasive struggle exists. At the heart of this “struggle for the soul of Islam” between conservatives and reformers, mainstream Muslims and extremists, is the question of who should interpret Islam and how reform should be achieved. Its major issues include the relationship of religion to state and society, the role of Islamic law, the status of women and non-Muslims, the compatibility of Islam and democracy, and relations with the West.

While the revolution occurring in contemporary Islam is often seen through the lens of explosive headline events, of radicalism and extremism, the real revolution is the quiet revolution in Islamic discourse and activism. The Quran and Sunnah (“example”) of the Prophet Muhammad remain normative for all Muslims, but questions of interpretation, authenticity, and application have become contentious. Muslim scholars distinguish the eternal, immutable principles and laws in the Quran from its human interpretation and application (*fiqh*) by early jurists, which are prescriptions that are responses to specific contexts. Some distinguish between the Meccan, the earlier and more religiously binding, and the Medinan chapters of the Quran, which are seen as primarily political, concerned with Muhammad’s creation of the Medinan state, and therefore, not universally binding. The distinction is often made in the classical division of law into a Muslim’s duties to God (*ibadat*, or “worship”) and duties to others (*muamalat*, “social obligations”), which are the product of reason and social custom, contingent upon historical and social circumstances. Many *ulama* continue to accept the authoritative traditions (*hadith*) of the Prophet, but other Muslim scholars distinguish between authoritative texts and those that are not authentic.

Legal reform remains a contested issue in many Muslim states that implemented Western-inspired legal codes. Governments imposed reforms from above through legislation. In more recent decades, the debate over the Shariah has become a contentious issue. Does Islamization of law mean the wholesale reintroduction of classical law as formulated in the early Islamic centuries? Or does it mean the development of new laws derived from the

Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet and the inclusion of laws, whatever their source, that are not contrary to Islam? Who is to oversee this process: rulers, *ulama*, or parliaments?

Modern reformers get at the core issue, the relationship of the divine to the human in Islamic law.

The reintroduction of Islamic law has been diverse, as Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Saudi

Arabia demonstrate. Reimplementation of *hudud* (Quranically prescribed crimes and punishments for alcohol consumption, theft, fornication, adultery, and false witness) often had a negative impact on women and minorities, raising serious questions about a setback in the gains made in many societies.

Four general Muslim orientations can be identified. Secularists believe religion is a personal matter and should be excluded from politics and public life. Conservatives (most of the *ulama* and their followers) emphasize following *taqlid* (“past tradition”) and are wary of any change, which they regard as *bida* (“deviation”), the Christian equivalent of heresy.

Mainstream Islamic activists (who are lay, not clerical) respect the classical formulations of law but are not wedded to them, emphasizing a return to “fundamentals” (Quran and Sunnah) and reinterpreting (*ijtihad*) Islamic belief and institutions. Like the Muslim Brotherhood, their holistic understanding of Islam fosters social and political activism. Because they have difficulty distinguishing between the divine and human prescriptions of the tradition, they are slow to reformulate Islamic responses in such sensitive areas as Islamic law and the status of women and minorities.

Modern reformers get at the core issue, the relationship of the divine to the human in Islamic law, by distinguishing between the Shariah, God's divinely revealed law, and *fiqh* ("understanding"), human interpretation and application that is historically conditioned. They go further than fundamentalists in their acceptance of the degree and the extent to which enshrined classical formulations of Islamic law may be changed.

Islamic reform is evident in the current debate over key issues, such as the relationship of Islam to the state, political participation or democratization, reform of Islamic law, and promotion of religious and political pluralism. Muslim experiments run the gamut from conservative monarchies, such as in Saudi Arabia, to radical approaches in Libya, Sudan, and Iran; from Islamic social and political activism working within society (creating schools and hospitals, providing social services, participating in elections) in Egypt, Turkey, and Jordan to violent revolutions that try to topple governments and impose authoritarian versions of Islamic rule.

Two questions face Muslim communities as they define the relationship and relevance of Islam to their lives: Who has the authority to interpret Islam and what are the relevant and acceptable interpretations of Islam for today's world? As in the past, both the *ulama* and Muslim rulers continue to assert their right to protect, defend, and promote Islam. Many rulers, through cooptation and coercion, combine their obligation to protect and promote Islam with the state's power to influence, control, and promote an acceptable "brand" of Islam. The result is a broad range of interpretations, from conservative to revolutionary. Today, many argue that not rulers or clergy but the laity and parliaments should be major actors in the process of change. As in Christianity and Judaism, an educated laity has increasingly asserted its role in the community. Today, the main issue is: Should the process of renewal and reform be one of restoration or reinterpretation?

A primary example of Islamic reformism and its method today is the debate over Islam and democracy. Some Muslims maintain that Islam has its own system of government, that democracy is based on un-Islamic Western principles and values. Others reinterpret traditional Islamic concepts, such as consultation and consensus of the community, to support modern political participation, such as parliamentary elections.

The status of non-Muslims is another example of the current debate. Many want to reinstate the traditional doctrine of non-Muslims as “protected” (*dhimmi*) people. Ahead of its time in the past, today, this doctrine consigns non-Muslims to second-class citizenship in rights to vote and to hold senior government positions. Others advocate non-Muslims’ rights to full and equal citizenship, fostering an egalitarian and pluralist society of Muslims and non-Muslims. The swelling numbers of Muslim refugees and the migration of many Muslims to Europe and America make minority rights and duties an ever-greater concern for Islamic jurisprudence.

Another result of contemporary Islamic revivalism has been a reexamination of the role of women in Islam and, at times, a bitter debate over their function in society. The resurgence of Islam has sometimes worsened rather than alleviated the situation of Muslim women. Women have often become a “quick fix” for those who wish to Islamize society. This has often meant dismissing modern reforms or paradigms as simply Westernization. On the other hand, Muslim women have also become catalysts for change, entering new professions, running for elective office, becoming students and scholars of Islam, and establishing women’s professional organizations, journals, and magazines.

The Islamic revival produced a third alternative, both modern and rooted in Islamic faith, identity, and values. Distinguishing between Islam and patriarchy, between revelation and male interpretations in patriarchal settings, women are working to redefine their role in society. In many instances, this change has been symbolized by a return to Islamic dress or the donning of a headscarf, or *hijab*, combining social change with indigenous Islamic values and ideals. New experiments have resulted in more women “returning to the mosque,” forming their own prayer and Quran study groups. Women as individuals and organizations are writing and speaking out for themselves on women’s issues ranging from dress to education, employment, and political participation.

In contrast to Judaism and Christianity, Muslims, under European colonial dominance and rule, have had a few decades to accomplish what in the West took the Enlightenment, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and French and American revolutions. Like believers in other faiths, the critical question today

facing Islam and Muslim communities globally involves the relationship of faith and tradition to change in a rapidly changing and pluralistic world. As Fazlur Rahman has said, Islamic reform requires “first-class minds who can interpret the old in terms of the new as regards substance and turn the new into the service of the old as regards ideals” (Rahman, p. 139). ■

Suggested Reading

Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Today*, chapter 4.

John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, chapter 4.

Questions to Consider

1. How have Muslims answered the question “Who has the authority to interpret Islam and what is the best method for reform?”
2. What are some of the major debates and areas of reform in Muslim societies today?

Women and Change in Islam

Lecture 10

The status of women in Islam is a hotly contested issue, both in the Muslim world and in the West.

For several decades, women in Muslim societies have been part of the dialectics of change, an erratic, vacillating, and contradictory process that creates many anomalies and contradictions. Evidence of women's status represents great diversity across the Muslim world. In some Muslim countries, women drive cars and ride motorcycles freely; hold professional positions in virtually every sector; serve as ambassadors, parliamentary members, judges; outnumber men at universities; and have the right to vote. In others, they need a male's permission to travel; cannot drive a car; are sexually segregated; must be completely covered in public; cannot vote; are restricted by "Islamic laws" that severely limit their rights in marriage, divorce, and inheritance; and face courts that condemn them to be stoned to death if found guilty of fornication or adultery.

Such contradictions are also evident in the issue of veiling. If many associate the veil with the oppression of women, others say veiling preserves women's dignity, freedom, and modesty. Since the 1970s, a significant number of "modern" women from Cairo to Jakarta have turned or returned to wearing Islamic dress. Such women are active agents for change. They believe they are better able to function as independent subjects, commanding respect as individuals, rather than sex objects. Islamic dress is also used as sign of protest and liberation. It has developed political overtones, becoming a source of national pride and resistance to Western cultural and political dominance and to authoritarian regimes.

Although women's status in Muslim countries has long been seen as evidence of "Islam's" oppression of women, the reality is far more complex. The revelation of Islam raised the status of women by prohibiting female infanticide, abolishing women's status as property, establishing women's legal capacity, granting women the right to receive their own dowry,

changing marriage from a proprietary to a contractual relationship, and allowing women to retain control over their property and use their maiden names after marriage. The Quran also granted women financial maintenance from their husbands and controlled the husband's free ability to divorce.

The Quran declares that men and women are equal in the eyes of God; man and woman were created to be equal parts of a pair (51:49).

Men and women are equally responsible for adhering to the Five Pillars of Islam (9:71–72). Some modernist scholars argue on the basis of both content and chronology that this verse is the ideal vision of the relationship between men and women in Islam—one of equality and complementarity.

If this is the case, why are there problems with the status of women in Muslim countries? Most Islamic societies have been patriarchal, and women have long been considered to be the culture-bearers within these societies. The Quran, *hadith*, and Islamic law have long been interpreted by men in these patriarchal societies. Women, from the Prophet's wives to scholars and Sufi mystics, have exercised leadership at different points in history. Yet, in practice, patriarchy prevailed, as men functioned as the primary political, religious, and intellectual leaders and

Women, from the Prophet's wives to scholars and Sufi mystics, have exercised leadership at different points in history.

women were often marginalized in the mosque and public spaces. Reformers have argued that Quranic verses favoring men need reinterpretation in light of the new social, cultural, and economic realities in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Quranic interpretation is at the center of many debates. One controversial verse is Quran 4:34, which says, "Men have responsibility for and priority over women, since God has given some of them advantages over others and because they should spend their wealth [for the support of women]." Contrary to many traditional interpretations, contemporary scholars have noted that the "priority" referred to in this verse is based on men's socioeconomic responsibilities for women. It does not say women are incapable of

managing their own affairs. Nowhere does the Quran explicitly state that all men are superior to, preferred to, or better than all women. God's expressed preference for certain individuals in the Quran is based on their faith, not their gender.

Another controversial Quranic stipulation (2:282) is that two female witnesses are equal to one male witness. Over time, this was interpreted by male scholars to mean that a woman's testimony should always count for one-half of the value of a man's testimony. Contemporary reformers stress the socio-historical context in which the verse was revealed, a time when women were not active in business or finance and a woman's expertise in these fields would most likely have been less than a man's. Another interpretation argues that the requirement was based on the concern that male family members might pressure a woman into testifying in their favor. Others argue for women's free access to education, both secular and religious, so that they will automatically be equal to men in a business environment—something that is not prohibited by the Quran. In light of women's right to own property and make their own investments, they say, this interpretation reflects broader Quranic values.

Gender discrimination broadly exists in women's restricted divorce rights in contrast to men's extensive divorce and marriage rights in many regions. Reformers maintain that the Quran and *hadith* literature support contemporary reinterpretation and reform in divorce laws. They have also argued that Quranic verses prohibit polygamy and that the true Quranic ideal is monogamy. Particularly notable across the Muslim world in the latter half of the 20th century have been reforms in marriage and divorce laws, including the abolition or severe limitation of polygamy; expanded rights for women seeking divorce, including the right to financial compensation; expanded rights for women to participate in contracting their marriages; prohibition of child marriages; and expanded rights of women to have custody over their older children, but this process is not over.

The practice of separation has both religious and cultural origins. The Prophet's Medina did not practice sexual segregation, although the Quran advises Muhammad's wives to "stay in your homes," "not display your

finery,” and place a barrier between themselves and unrelated males. Modern reformers explain that these controversial verses specifically address only the wives of the Prophet and that, until the modern age, jurists relied primarily on prophetic traditions, as well as the belief that women are a source of temptation for men. However, ultraconservatives have maintained that these verses apply to all Muslim women. Opinions vary today about the necessity of separation of the sexes.

A new source of women’s empowerment today has become their active participation in the mosque and their use of scripture and religion to reclaim their rights in Muslim societies. In political affairs, women independently pledged their oath of allegiance (*bayah*) to Muhammad, often without the knowledge or approval of male family members, and in many cases, distinguished women converted to Islam before the men in their families. In the centuries after the death of Muhammad, women prayed regularly with men in the mosque and played a significant role as transmitters of *hadith* (prophetic traditions) and in the development of Sufism (Islamic mysticism). Reformers today emphasize that just as women during the time of the Prophet prayed in the mosque, so too today, they actively exercise that right.

The contemporary reality in much of the Muslim world reflects deep divisions in the ongoing struggle over the status and rights of Muslim women between conservatives and “fundamentalists” versus a broad spectrum of reformers. As the examples of the Taliban’s Afghanistan and courts in Nigeria and Pakistan reflect, patriarchal interpretations of the past and tribal custom have proven a formidable obstacle and a source of oppression and injustice. At the same time, in an increasingly modern, globalizing world, where two incomes are often necessary to maintain a household, Muslim women in many societies, from Egypt and Syria to Malaysia and Indonesia, have greater access to education and employment and are forging new paths for themselves and the next generation. ■

Suggested Reading

Akbar Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*.

Yvonne Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito, *Islam, Gender and Social Change*.

Amina Wadud, *Quran and Women*.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the major obstacles that have contributed to the low status of women in many societies and that continue to impede progress today?
2. What are some of the major issues that women have confronted in redefining and reforming their status and roles?

Islam in the West

Lecture 11

Muslims in Europe and America are a combination of immigrants and indigenous converts. They represent a cross-section of national, ethnic, and racial backgrounds and socioeconomic classes. They, like religious minorities before them, face issues of faith and identity, integration and assimilation.

Muslims were present in America before the 19th century. The explorers, traders, and settlers who visited the New World from the time of Columbus included Moriscos (Spanish Muslims who hid their Muslim faith) who migrated to both Spanish and Portuguese settlements in America. Between 14 and 20 percent of the African slaves brought to America between the 16th and 19th centuries were Muslim, although they were forced to convert to Christianity. Indians and Arabs, who were not slaves, also immigrated during this period and maintained their spiritual, cultural, and social identity.

The numbers of Muslims in America increased in the late 19th century. Significant numbers of immigrants from the Arab world (Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan) settled in the Midwest and Canada as blue-collar workers and assimilated into American society. After World War II, large numbers of immigrants from Palestine, who had lost their homes after the creation of Israel in 1948, and elites from the Middle East and South Asia, seeking an education or professional advancement, came to America.

In recent decades, many students from the Muslim world have come to study in the United States, and many well-educated professionals and intellectuals have come from South and Southeast Asia, as well as from the Middle East, for political and economic reasons.

African-American Islam emerged in the early 20th century when a number of black Americans converted to Islam, the religion they believed was part of their original African identity and that they preferred over Christianity,

which was seen as a religion of white supremacy and oppression. In the early 1930s, Wallace D. Fard Muhammad, called the Great Mahdi, drew on the Quran and the Bible to preach black liberation and build the Nation of Islam in the ghettos of Detroit.

When Fard mysteriously disappeared in 1934, Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975) took over and built the Nation of Islam, into an effective national movement whose members became known as “Black Muslims.” Elijah Muhammad denounced white society’s political and economic oppression of blacks and its results—self-hatred, poverty, and dependence—and taught self-improvement and empowerment. By the 1970s, his Nation of Islam had more than 100,000 members. Many Black Muslim movement beliefs differed from mainstream Islam, and the Nation did not follow the Five Pillars of Islam or observe major Muslim rituals.

Malcolm X, ex-smoker, ex-drinker, ex-Christian, and ex-slave gained prominence in the Nation of Islam. In 1964, he started his own organization and went on pilgrimage to Mecca, returning as El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, a Muslim. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated as he spoke to an audience in New York City. Two members of the Nation of Islam were convicted of the murder.

In the 1960s, the sons of Elijah Muhammad challenged their father’s teachings and strategies. Near the end of his life, Elijah Muhammad also made the pilgrimage to Mecca and began to modify some of his teachings. When Wallace D. Muhammad succeeded his father, he implemented major reforms to align the community with the global and American mainstream Islamic community. Media coverage of the Black Muslim movement often focuses on Louis Farrakhan, who led a minority of Nation members in protest against Warith’s reforms. In recent years, Farrakhan has moved the Nation closer to more orthodox Islamic practices, maintaining a closer identity with mainstream Islam.

The problems the growing Muslim community faces in the United States start with the fact that only a few decades ago, Muslims were mostly invisible in the West. Their visibility then emerged by association with the “militant”

Nation of Islam or conflicts (Iranian Revolution, hijackings, hostage taking, and acts of terror in the Middle East and South Asia). Some saw these events as signs of an Islamic threat or a clash of civilizations, Islam versus the West. America's relationship with Muslims was seen in a context of conflict and confrontation.

Like many other immigrants of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds, Muslims have been challenged to define their place in American and European society. Like Jewish law for Jews, Islamic law is central to a Muslim's life, covering religious requirements, dietary regulations, and family law. Ironically, many of the minorities who preceded them and "made it in America" do not identify with Muslims and fail to see the similarities between their own past and Muslims' current problems.

Often, Muslims fall outside the circle of American pluralism. However different previous religious and ethnic minorities, the vast majority were Judeo-Christian. Most regard Islam as foreign. Few think of it as an Abrahamic religion, part of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. In the absence of this knowledge and awareness, Islam is often seen through explosive "headline events," and thus, the hatred and violence of a minority of religious extremists obscure the faith of the mainstream majority.

In recent years, a major issue for Muslims has been the Americanization of the Muslim experience. Because *imams* coming from foreign countries are not always aware of or sensitive to the problems that American Muslims encounter, training of "native" *imams* has been seriously undertaken since the 1980s. Legal councils addressing life in America have been founded to respond to questions raised by communities here and Muslims participate in interfaith activities with Jews and Christians. Additionally, a host of national and international organizations have been created to monitor and promote Muslim causes and interests.

Despite problems, however, Muslims, long regarded as "other," are now part of the fabric of our society, as neighbors, coworkers, citizens, and believers. Muslims have increasingly become more integrated into the American political process, both as individuals and organizationally.

Estimates of the number of Muslims living in Western Europe range from 12 to 15 million. The ethnic diversity of Muslims in Europe represents most of the major ethnic groups of the Muslim world. Most numerous are Turks, Algerians, Moroccans, and Pakistanis. Because of this great diversity and despite a common religious bond, it is difficult to speak of a homogenous Muslim community in any individual country, let alone across Europe.

Muslims may be found in significant numbers in most Western European countries. The largest Muslim populations are in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, followed by smaller communities in such countries as Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and

Some estimates indicate that Muslims will outnumber non-Muslims in Europe by 2050.

Austria. Some estimates indicate that Muslims will outnumber non-Muslims in Europe by 2050. The major waves of Muslim migration to Europe came after World War II, in large part, the result of labor immigration and a vestigial colonial

connection. When their countries achieved independence, many Muslims chose to emigrate. Professionals and skilled laborers from former European colonies in Africa, South Asia, and the Arab world sought a better life.

In the 1960s and 1970s, unskilled laborers flooded into a Europe whose growing economies were in need of cheap labor. From the 1970s onward, increasing numbers of Muslim students came to Europe, as they did to America, to study. Although many returned home, others, for political or economic reasons, chose to stay.

Britain's 1 to 2 million Muslims come primarily from the Indian subcontinent. In contrast to France and Germany, where most Muslims do not have the right to vote, most Muslims in Britain come from British Commonwealth countries and, thus, have enjoyed British citizenship and full participation in political life, as voters and as candidates; indeed, some have been elected to political office.

Assimilation has been particularly acute in France, where the government insists on full integration, rather than the multicultural approaches of Britain and America.

However different their experiences may be, Muslims in Europe and in America have common concerns about practicing their faith, retaining Islamic identity, and preserving family life and values. Specific concerns include taking time out from work to pray daily, to attend mosque on Friday, and to celebrate the two great Islamic holidays (Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr); the availability of *halal* foods in schools and the military; and for those women who wish to do so, the right to wear a headscarf (*hijab*). Some request segregated athletics classes and are concerned about coeducation, sex education, homosexuality, and secularism in the schools.

Living as a minority in a dominant culture that is often ignorant about Islam, or even hostile to it, many Muslims experience a sense of marginalization, alienation, and powerlessness. Muslim experiences in Europe and America have been affected significantly by the actions of militants, especially since September 11, 2001, as well as by domestic issues. In France, Islamic terrorism has also led to doubts about Islam's compatibility with French culture and concerns that French Muslims could ever be loyal citizens. One of the most serious effects has been the increasing concern over the erosion of civil liberties for Muslim Americans.

Muslims are now part of the fabric of American and European societies. In the United States, a host of national and international organizations have been created to monitor and promote Muslim interests. Obviously, coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims is here to stay. All are challenged to move beyond stereotypes and established patterns of behavior to a more inclusive and pluralistic vision informed by a multidimensional dialogue, to build a future based on mutual understanding and respect. ■

Suggested Reading

Yvonne Y. Haddad, “The Globalization of Islam,” *The Oxford History of Islam*, chapter 14.

Yvonne Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito, *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*

Jane Smith, *Islam in America*.

Shireen Hunter, *Islam: Europe’s Second Religion*.

Questions to Consider

1. What are some of the challenges facing Muslims as religious minorities in the West?
2. Why and how did the Nation of Islam develop and how did it become integrated with the mainstream Islamic community?

The Future of Islam

Lecture 12

For Muslims, the 21st century will be a time not only for self-reflection, self-criticism, and internal reform, both religiously and politically, but also a time for educating, engaging in dialogue with, and finding new ways in which to work with and within the West and global civilization.

In the 21st century, Islam remains the fastest growing religion in many parts of the world and a significant factor in international politics. Thus, as we have seen, expanding our understanding of this global religion is important. Our past lessons have focused on the dynamism and creativity that exists in the history and development of Islam. Although a dynamic faith and source for the development of vast empires and rich civilizations in the past, in recent centuries, Islam seemed stagnant, passive, of marginal concern, and in decline, doomed to be overtaken by modernization and development. In the latter half of the 20th century, an Islamic resurgence, as we have seen, has challenged all expectations and predictions. However, this revitalization of Islam in Muslim life and society, which sometimes seems to be a radical revolution, is both a challenge and a threat to Muslim societies and the West.

Despite its emergence as the second and third largest religion in Europe and America in the late 20th century, for many majority non-Muslim populations, the religion of Islam is still regarded as foreign to their Judeo-Christian and secular backgrounds. In recent centuries, Islam has been associated with underdevelopment, authoritarian regimes, religious extremism, and terrorism. Ethnic and cultural differences and the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, and al-Qaeda have raised the specter of a particularly violence-prone religion.

A Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition actually exists. As we have seen, despite significant differences, Islam shares many important similarities and linkages with the worldviews of Judaism and Christianity, from its belief in one God and acceptance of biblical prophets and revelation to moral responsibility

and accountability. However, relations among the children of Abraham have, from the seventh century to the present, been characterized as much by competition and conflict as by coexistence and cooperation. The impact of European colonialism, secular paths of modernization and Westernization chosen by many Muslim states, and the nature of authoritarian regimes and their consequent hold on tradition have stifled the pace of Islamic reform.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism emerged in the latter half of the 20th century as a response in personal and public life to the failures of Muslim states and the excesses of Westernization. Religion became the dominant language and symbolism of political discourse in many Muslim societies. The impact of Islamic revivalism in its violent revolutionary forms, from Egypt and Iran to Afghanistan and Pakistan, has strengthened militant interpretations of Islam and proven a major obstacle to Islamic reform. Militants have not only imposed their brand of Islam but also silenced alternative voices.

The struggle for an Islamic reformation in the 21st century is a battle in which lines are increasingly drawn between conservatives, fundamentalists, and reformers. Muslim understanding and interpretation of Islam, along with attitudes toward change and modernization, reflect a broad religious diversity.

Secularists, in light of the chaos and carnage caused by militants and Muslim extremists, reemphasize the idea that the future development of Muslim societies is contingent on the separation of religion and politics. Many argue that after the death of Muhammad, religion, though used by rulers, was in fact, separate from the state. Conservatives and traditionalists reaffirm the continued relevance of Islamic faith and traditions amidst rapid, predominantly Western-oriented change, whose secularism and material excesses they reject.

Liberal reformers, an extension of early Islamic modernists, advocate an Islamic reformation, a fresh reinterpretation or reconstruction of religious thought, and the transformation of Muslim societies based on a selective synthesis of aspects of Islamic, Western, and other cultures.

Islamic activists, commonly referred to as fundamentalists or Islamists, maintain that reform is possible by returning to the sources of Islam, the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet, to revitalize and reform Muslim societies. They are more critical of any form of dependency on or significant influence by the West. They are particularly sensitive to the penetration of Western culture and values. Islamic movements and organizations span the spectrum, from mainstream organizations that operate within society to extremists who rely on violence and terrorism.

As with other religions, central to contemporary Islamic reform are issues of authority: the authority of scripture, tradition, and the *ulama*. Tradition plays a major role in all the world's religions and is especially sacrosanct in Islam, a primary source of Islamic law and of Muslim faith and belief.

Although the authority of the Quran remains paramount for all observant Muslims, reminiscent of biblical criticism, some scholars (more non-Muslim than Muslim) have raised substantive questions about the historicity of the Quran, Muhammad, and much of early Islamic history. However, the majority of scholars, while affirming the need for ongoing reassessment of scholarship in light of new information, would continue to affirm the essential historicity of the Prophet and the text of the Quran.

Because Islam is the youngest of the Abrahamic faiths, its historical issues are far less complicated than historical questions regarding early biblical prophets, such as Moses, David, and Saul. Non-Muslim and some Muslim scholars have also questioned the authenticity of many prophetic traditions. Although some have questioned the authenticity of the bulk of the *hadith*, most have not. Wherever one stands on this issue, at the very least, the *hadith* are important because they present a glimpse of the early social history of the Muslim community: its issues, concerns, and responses.

The voices of change are not restricted to the *ulama*, the traditional standard bearers of Islam. Increasingly, reformers are lay men and women with modern education and Islamic orientation, who assert their competence to address issues as diverse as bioethics and medical ethics (birth control, abortion,

cloning), gender, violence and religious extremism, democratization, and pluralism.

At the end of the 20th century, the future of Islam in the 21st century held the hope of a new millennium of globalization and opportunity. For many Muslims, there were dreams of peace in Palestine, increased democratization and greater freedom in Muslim countries, and the growth and empowerment of Muslims in America and Europe, where Islam had emerged as a major religious presence. However, the lives, expectations, and dreams of many were shattered with the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. These attacks reinforced the voices of a clash of civilizations between peoples with diametrically opposed principles, values, and interests. Within a matter of hours, a handful of terrorists transformed the 21st century from a century of great expectations to a world dominated by an American-led war against global terrorism. It reinforced the image of Islam and Muslims as a religion and a people to be feared and fought.

Historically, religion has been and continues to be used and misused. Although religion is a source of transcendence, it has also had its dark side. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all of which teach peace, the value of human life, morals, and accountability, have been used to legitimate holy wars and the slaughter of innocent people, past and present.

Islam and Muslims continue to be plagued by questions in the wake of the impact of religious extremism in the Muslim world and the West. Among them are: Is Islam a particularly violence-prone religion, one that educates and motivates terrorists who attack the West? Religion has been used by diverse governments and groups, secular and religious, mainstream and extremist, to legitimate their policies or anti-Westernism. For example, more secular Arab socialist regimes in Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Iraq in the 1960s and early 1970s and Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto used Islam to legitimate their versions of socialism and to criticize Western capitalism. In the 1980s, self-styled Islamic governments in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan also appealed to Islam. Although many Islamic political and social

organizations have worked within the system, extremists have appealed to religion to legitimate their acts of violence and terror.

The extent to which extremists have hijacked Islam was signaled tragically by the September 11, 2001, attacks masterminded by Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. The hijacking of religion by extremists is not limited to Islam but is found in the history of most religious traditions. Extremists have used Christianity to justify slavery, the Klu Klux Klan, the decades-long war between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Serbian genocide in Bosnia, and the destruction of abortion clinics. Jewish extremists have claimed religious legitimacy in the assassination of Israel's Prime Minister Rabin or slaughtering Muslims at Friday prayer in the Hebron mosque, built on a site sacred to Muslims and Jews.

Terrorists, including bin Laden and others, go beyond classical Islam's criteria for a just *jihad* and recognize no limits but their own, using any weapons or means. They reject Islamic law's regulations regarding the goals and means of a valid *jihad* (that violence must be proportional and that only the necessary amount of force should be used to repel the enemy), that innocent civilians should not be targeted, and that *jihad* must be declared by the ruler or head of state. Today, individuals and groups, religious and lay, seize the right to declare and legitimate unholy wars in the name of Islam.

On the other hand, many Islamic scholars and religious leaders across the Muslim world, such as the Islamic Research Council at al-Azhar University, regarded by many as the highest moral authority in Islam, have made strong, authoritative declarations against bin Laden's initiatives.

What does Islam have to do with the fact that many Muslim countries are authoritarian, limit free speech, and have weak civil societies? The sources of authoritarianism have less to do with religion and more to do with the legacy of European colonialism and the nature of most modern Muslim states. On achieving independence in the mid-20th century, governments were led by rulers who were kings, military or ex-military, who turned to authoritarian rule and security forces to remain in power and to ensure the stability and security of their governments. Many of these governments have had close

ties with America and European powers, from Egypt, the Shah's Iran, and Saudi Arabia to Pakistan and Suharto's Indonesia.

Is Islam incompatible with democracy, pluralism, and human rights? In recent decades, Islam has been cited by a broad range of Muslims who believe it is incompatible with democracy, from the conservative monarchy of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to radical extremist organizations. At the same time, reformers have reinterpreted traditional Islamic beliefs and concepts (*ijtihad*, *shura*, *ijma*, *maslaha*) to support modern notions of popular political participation, pluralism, and human rights.

Is Islam incompatible with capitalism? Historically, Islam is a religion that grew up in a commercially oriented society and has been intertwined with commerce and trade. The Prophet Muhammad was a successful businessman, as were many early Muslim leaders and scholars. The great mosques of Islam, such as the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, have extensive bazaars adjacent, selling every imaginable product. Private property has always been recognized in Islam. Many of the *ulama* come from business- and land-owning families. In practice, capitalism has not been a religious stumbling block. Unfettered capitalism and conspicuous consumption that are insensitive to issues of social justice do present a problem for the religiously minded.

Is Islam incompatible with capitalism?

Many in the Muslim world, like many in other parts of the world, are concerned about the dark side of capitalism. Others fear a globalization that will lead to greater Western economic penetration in Muslim countries and the result, continued Muslim dependence on the West. Perhaps the best response to those asking if Islam and capitalism are compatible is to look at the lives of millions of Muslims who live and work in our midst in America and Europe who have come here to enjoy the freedom and opportunities offered by our economic and political systems.

Is Islam a particularly misogynist religion? One of the major criticisms of Islam and Muslim societies involves the status and treatment of women.

After September 11, 2001, the plight of women under the Taliban, as well as their sisters in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and elsewhere, resulted in a powerful critique of Islam and a clarion call for change. Increasingly, women are challenging the patriarchy of their Islamic tradition in mosques and societies, from Egypt and Iran to America, as they seek to carve out new paths in their quest for empowerment and liberation.

The debate over the *hijab* (“headscarf”) rages from Muslim Turkey and Tunisia to secular France and America. Critics continue to see the *hijab* as a symbol of oppression and subservience to a male-dominated culture. Yet increasing numbers of women see the *hijab* as a symbol of freedom, as well as a bridge between their religious tradition and the realities of modern life. ■

Suggested Reading

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John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, chapters 5–6.

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Yvonne Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito, *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*

Questions to Consider

1. What are the differing ways in which Muslims have responded to modern reform?
2. Identify and discuss two major issues faced by contemporary Muslims

Timeline

c. 570	Birth of Muhammad.
610	Muhammad receives call to prophethood with first revelation of the Quran.
620	Muhammad's night journey to Jerusalem.
622	<i>Hijra</i> of Muhammad and early Muslim community to Medina from Mecca; first year of the Muslim lunar calendar.
624	Battle of Badr, in which Muslims are outnumbered but victorious over Meccans.
627	Battle of the Trench; Muhammad and Muslims victorious over Meccans.
632	Death of Muhammad.
632–661	Reign of four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, formative period for Sunnis.
638	Muslims conquer Jerusalem.
661–750	Umayyad caliphate.
680	Martyrdom of Husayn and followers in Karbala; beginning of Shii paradigm of protest, suffering, and injustice.
8 th –9 th centuries	Major Sunni law schools founded.

750–1258.....	Abbasid caliphate, high point of Islamic civilization, patronage of art and culture, development of Islamic law, and rising trade, agriculture, industry, and commerce.
874.....	Twelfth Shii <i>imam</i> disappears/goes into occultation, ending direct rule of Shii <i>imams</i> .
1058–1111	Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, synthesizer of Islamic law, theology, and mysticism.
1095–1453.....	Crusades.
1099.....	Christian Crusaders capture Jerusalem and establish Latin Kingdom.
12 th century.....	Rise of Sufi orders.
1187.....	Saladin recovers Jerusalem for Muslims.
1281–1924.....	Ottoman Empire.
1501–1722.....	Safavid Empire (Iran).
1526–1857.....	Mughal Empire (South Asia).
18 th century.....	Major period of Islamic revivalism and reform, in which Islam is posited as a means for socio-moral reconstruction of society.
1703–1792.....	Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, founder of Wahhabi movement.

19 th century.....	Islamic modernism develops in response to European imperial expansion in Muslim world.
1817–1898.....	Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Indian religious and educational reformer.
1838–1897.....	Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, father of Islamic modernism.
1848–1885.....	Muhammad Ahmad, Mahdi of Sudan and founder of Islamic state.
1849–1905.....	Muhammad Abduh, co-founder of Salafiyyah movement and major architect of Islamic modernism.
1865–1935.....	Rashid Rida, cofounder of Salafiyyah movement in Egypt and Islamic modernist movements.
1877–1938.....	Muhammad Iqbal, ideologue for foundation of Pakistan as homeland for Indian Muslims.
1897–1975.....	Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam in the United States.
1903–1979.....	Mawlana Mawdudi, founder of Jamaat-i Islami in Pakistan.
1906–1949.....	Hasan al-Banna, founder of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

1906–1966.....	Sayyid Qutb, radical and militant Islamic scholar and activist calling for violence as a means of restoring and implementing Islam in the public sphere.
1928.....	Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt.
1941.....	Jamaat-i Islami founded in Pakistan.
1947.....	Foundation of Pakistan as homeland for Muslims.
1956.....	Pakistan becomes Islamic republic.
1967.....	Arab-Israeli war sparks Islamic revival.
1973.....	Second Arab-Israeli war—“Operation Badr”—results in recovery of some Egyptian territory; first Arab oil embargo against West places Arabs as world economic power.
1978–1979.....	Iranian Revolution and foundation of Islamic Republic of Iran under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini; seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Islamic militants.
1981.....	Assassination of Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat by Muslim extremists.
1988.....	Benazir Bhutto elected prime minister of Pakistan, making her the first elected female Muslim head of state.

1990.....	Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) wins major victory in Algerian elections against the secular FLN.
1992.....	After FIS victory in parliamentary elections, the military stages a coup to prevent FIS from coming to power, sparking a 10-year civil war in which 100,000 die.
1994.....	Baruch Goldstein (Jewish settler) kills 29 Muslim worshippers at the Mosque of the Patriarch in Hebron, sparking Palestinian-Israeli and Jewish-Muslim violence and HAMAS suicide bomber attacks against Jewish civilians in Israel; Taliban fundamentalists gain power in Afghanistan.
1997.....	Mohammad Khatami elected president of Iran on a platform to bring greater reforms (political participation, rule of law, civil society, and human rights) to Iranian society.
2000.....	Warith Deen Muhammad, head of American Muslim Mission, offers prayer at opening of U.S. Congress.
2001.....	U.S. Postal Service issues stamp commemorating Muslim holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha, representing Islam's place as part of the American landscape; attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon by terrorists in the name of Islam.

Glossary

Abrahamic tradition: Belief in Abraham as the first monotheist and common religious ancestor of Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

Allah: God.

caliph: Sunni political successor to Muhammad.

Eid al-Adha: “Feast of the Sacrifice,” major Muslim holiday. Occurs toward the end of the *hajj*.

Eid al-Fitr: “Feast of the Breaking of the Fast,” major Muslim holiday. Occurs at the end of the month of Ramadan.

***fatwa*:** Legal opinion given by an expert in Islamic law.

***fiqh*:** Islamic jurisprudence.

Five Pillars: Five requirements of faith for all Muslims, which are making the declaration of faith, engaging in prayer five times daily, tithing, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and making the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.

***hadith*:** Accounts of the sayings and deeds of Muhammad, considered, along with the Quran, to be divine and authoritative revelation.

***hajj*:** Pilgrimage to Mecca to be made once in a lifetime by every Muslim.

***halal*:** Food prepared in accordance with Islamic law.

***hijab*:** Headscarf or veil worn by Muslim women.

***hudud*:** Literally, “limits”. Refers to crimes specified by the Quran and carrying harsh penalties.

ijma: Consensus or agreement of the community, a source of Islamic law.

ijtihad: Independent reasoning.

imam: Shii political and religious successor to Muhammad.

Islam: “Submission” to God’s will.

jihad: “Struggle” or “exertion.” Can refer to internal struggle of Muslims to live a moral life or external struggle for social justice or defense of Muslim community.

Kaaba: Cube-shaped structure that is the object of the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca.

minaret: Tower of a mosque from which the call to prayer is issued.

mosque: Muslim house of worship.

muezzin: Person issuing the call to prayer.

mufti: Person issuing a legal opinion (*fatwa*).

mujtahid: Person carrying out independent interpretation of Islamic law (*ijtihad*).

Muslim: One who submits to God, or follows Islam.

qiyas: Juristic reasoning by analogy, a source of Islamic law.

Quran: Divine revelation of Islam.

Ramadan: Month of fasting for Muslims.

salat: Prayer or worship five times a day.

shahadah: Declaration or witnessing that “There is no god but the God and Muhammad is His Messenger.”

Shariah: Islamic law.

Shii: “Partisan”; one who believes that succession to leadership of the Muslim community should be hereditary.

Sufi: Muslim mystic.

Sunnah: Example of Muhammad, largely recorded in the *hadith*.

Sunni: “One adhering to the Sunnah”; one who believes that leadership of the Muslim community should be based on merit.

taqlid: Imitation of the past, particularly with respect to the interpretation of Islamic law.

tawhid: Unity of God, absolute monotheism.

ulama: Religious scholars.

ummah: Transnational Muslim community.

zakat: Tithing, which includes a percentage of a person’s total wealth (not just income) given for the poor.

Biographical Notes

Ali ibn Abu Talib (r. 656–660): Cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, husband of Fatima, and father of Hasan and Husayn. Fourth caliph of Sunni Islam and the first *imam* of Shii tradition. Ali was also the first male convert to Islam. His rule as caliph was marked by political crisis and civil strife, ending with his assassination.

Aisha: Muhammad's multitalented and influential wife, daughter of the first Sunni caliph, Abu Bakr. Recognized as an important source of knowledge of history, *hadith*, medicine, and rhetoric. Led her troops against those of Ali in the first inter-Muslim conflict.

Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905): Important Egyptian Islamic scholar, theologian, jurist, journalist, reformer, and activist who is widely considered to be the architect of Islamic modernism. Taught that Islam and modernity are compatible and that revelation and reason, correctly perceived, are inherently harmonious. Used his position as Grand Mufti to implement educational, legal, and social reforms. The bitter opposition he experienced from academic and legal foes reflected the range of his influence and vision for a renewed Islam. His ideas opened up a fresh viewpoint and a reformist movement but left many issues unresolved.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897): “Father” of 19th-century Islamic modernism. Influential writer and political activist who emphasized the need for Muslim solidarity in the face of Western Christian imperialism. Taught the compatibility of Islam and science and encouraged the pursuit of scientific and technical education, self-improvement, and reform. Reinterpreting Islam in a modernist, pragmatic direction, Afghani was one of first Muslim activists to promote Islam as a primarily political program.

Abu Bakr (r. 632–634): First Sunni caliph (successor) and father of Muhammad's wife Aisha. Sunnis believe that he was elected to the caliphate by leaders of the early Muslim community after Muhammad's death. Abu Bakr unified Arabia by asserting his legitimacy on the basis of consultation.

Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949): Founder of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as a movement for political and religious activism. Taught that Islam is a comprehensive way of life. Sought the establishment of an Islamic state in which the Quran would serve as the constitution and Islamic law would be implemented. Advocated major principles of Islamic social justice that should be carried out by state institutions. Actively involved in a political underground that overthrew the Egyptian monarchy. Al-Banna was assassinated by Egyptian secret police in 1949 because of his opposition to the government.

Fatimah: The daughter and only child of Muhammad to survive into adulthood, Fatimah was the wife of Ali and mother of Hasan and Husayn. Shiis trace the lineage of the *imams* through her. Popularly believed to be the perfect example of Muslim womanhood and motherhood. Shiis further believe that she was sinless and immaculate. Known for her compassion for people and dedication to Islam. Comparable to the Christian Virgin Mary as a woman of sorrow.

Hussein (626–680): Grandson of Muhammad, son of Ali and Fatima, and third Shii *imam*. His quest to claim his position as *imam* led to his martyrdom, along with that of many of his followers, in military conflict with the Umayyad caliph, Yazid. Husayn's martyrdom established the Shii paradigm of suffering and oppression of their righteous community. Martyrdom has been interpreted in the contemporary era as a religious obligation of political resistance, revolution, and struggle for social justice. Husayn's martyrdom is ritually reenacted annually by Shiis during the Ashura observance, much like the crucifixion of Jesus in the Christian tradition.

Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid (1058–1111): Major Muslim scholar, theologian, and philosopher. Popularly considered one of the great revivers of Islam. Al Ghazali synthesized theology, Islamic law, and mysticism by emphasizing Islam's rationalism, as tempered by direct personal religious experience and interior devotion. He secured a place for Sufism within Islamic orthodoxy while rejecting an overly rationalist approach to Islamic law and theology.

Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792): Founder and ideologue of the Wahhabi movement. His strict adherence to *tawhid* (“absolute monotheism”) was symbolized by his support for the destruction of objects of popular veneration, including tombs and monuments. The Wahhabis became famous for their suppression of Sufism and opposition to Shiism. Some believe Wahhabism’s influence is apparent today in the Taliban’s destruction of Buddhist statues in Afghanistan.

Muhammad Ahmad (1848–1885): Self-proclaimed Mahdi and founder of an Islamic state in Sudan who claimed to be God’s divinely appointed representative. An opponent of alcohol, gambling, prostitution, and music as un-Islamic, foreign (Ottoman Egyptian) practices that had corrupted Sudanese society, he called for holy war against other Muslims who rejected his teachings.

Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938): Ideologue for the foundation of Pakistan as a homeland for Indian Muslims, as well as a religious and political leader and writer, professor, poet, and lawyer. Iqbal emphasized themes of the necessity of Muslim self-determination, national liberation of Muslims from India and Hindu rule, and Muslim nationalism. He taught the compatibility of Islam and science and encouraged Muslims to embrace and learn modern technology and science in order to improve their lives and development. Iqbal called for the reconstruction of religious thought in Islam.

Khadija: First and only wife of Muhammad for the 24 years of their marriage, which ended with her death. She met Muhammad when she hired him to oversee her caravan trade. Khadija was the first convert to Islam and Muhammad’s major supporter and encourager.

Mawlana Mawdudi (1903–1979): Ideologue and founder of Pakistani Jamaat-i Islami. A revivalist who called for purification and restoration of Islam to rejuvenate Muslim culture and society, Mawdudi campaigned for an Islamic state in Pakistan to establish Islamic society and order from the top down, although he discouraged the use of violence. He taught that education was a keystone of Islamic activism and that social activism was a necessary component of the practice of Islam.

Muhammad (c. 570–632): Prophet of Islam who received the revelation of the Quran. Muhammad served as the religio-political leader, social activist and reformer, judge, arbiter, lawgiver, and military leader of the early Muslim community. Muslims believe that he represents the perfect example of humanity because of his perfect adherence to the teachings of the Quran in both words and deeds. Records of his sayings and actions (*hadith*) are a source of scripture for Muslims.

Saladin: Leader of Muslim forces during the Crusades and one of the greatest Muslim military heroes, Saladin was responsible for the recovery of Jerusalem for Muslim rule. Renowned for his merciful treatment of prisoners, faithfulness to his word, and the fact that he allowed prisoners to practice their own religion, he was often contrasted by Muslims with the Christian hero Richard the Lionheart, who accepted the surrender of Acre, promising amnesty to its inhabitants but then slaughtering all, including women and children.

Umar ibn al-Khattab (r. 634–44 C.E.): Second Sunni caliph and companion of Muhammad. A great military leader who oversaw the major expansion of the Islamic Empire, he established many of the fundamental institutions of the classical Islamic state. Al-Khattab instituted practices of appointing an “election committee” to select his successor and allowing conquered people to continue to practice their own religions, as long as they recognized Muslim hegemony and paid a poll tax.

Uthman (r. 644–656): Third Sunni caliph and companion of Muhammad. Collection and preservation of the Quran as it is known today was completed under his reign. Uthman was believed to be personally pious but lacked the character to prevent his relatives from amassing political power. Discontent with his reign ended in his murder by opponents.

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